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Nineteenth-century Humility: a Vital Message for Today?

by Theron Schlabach

As you can see, my title refers to the nineteenth century, but I hope to say something for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While I do not believe in using history for polemics, I do believe that history should be a kind of dialogue between past and present. If it is to be a dialogue, then we must let it speak to us. But I will let you decide whether it speaks to the present or not.

I could have given this talk a different title: "What Might Have Been: Twentieth-century Mennonites and Humility." I believe we might have kept the humility motif more intact and central to our understandings of the faith and what makes for faithfulness than what we did. I guess it is no secret that I think that the Mennonite Church reformers of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries (the people of the period I have labeled the "Quickening" because there was such an increase in activity as Mennonites began to build colleges, publishing houses, orphans' homes, and hold young people's programs) would have done better if they had constructed their new, more activist, more outreaching Mennonite Church more by reworking the humility theology of the nineteenth century and less by abandoning the motif. The "what might have been," in my vision is a deeper understand-



Plainly dressed couple—The Mellingers of Hagerstown, Maryland: Reflecting "an outward appearance of humility in attire and demeanor." (Credit: Gayle Gerber Koontz)

ing of the prophetic, evangelistic possibilities of nineteenth-century Amish and Mennonite humility theology.

Humility theology dominated among (Old) Mennonites in North America in the first three-fourths of the nineteenth century. The original and clearest voice for humility theology was Christian Burkholder (1746-1809), a bishop in the Groffdale district in Lancaster Conference. In

1792, Burkholder wrote a manuscript in the form of a dialogue. On one side, he had an earnest youth asking questions of his pastor. In turn, the pastor kindly answered the youth's questions, explaining the faith in very clear, simple, yet profound language. Burkholder called it *Nützliche und Erbauliche Anrede an die Jugend* (*Useful and Edifying Address to the Young*).

The *Address* was not printed right away, but by 1804 the ministry in the Lancaster area decided it ought to be published. The book sold fast, and before the year was out, they published another version of it. The *Address* caught on so well that it was reprinted eight more times in German in the nineteenth century. In 1857 it was translated into English and published four times during the century. That says something about the importance of Burkholder's book.

Humility became the dominant way of thinking about the nature of Christ and the Christian life and of our relationship to the world.

We can see the *Address's* importance also in the way nineteenth-century Mennonites picked up and used the language of humility and its understandings. Humility became the dominant way of thinking about the nature of Christ and the Christian life and of our relationship to the world. The emphasis on humility continued until roughly 1875 or 1880 when the "Quickening" generation brought in different ideas, which to some degree replaced it, although not completely.

Burkholder's purpose was outreaching. The *Address* was not a book to help Mennonites to withdraw into themselves. Burkholder conceived of

humility as a Christian message for all Christian churches in America – not just a Mennonite emphasis, or a Mennonite peculiarity, or a Mennonite genius. He also understood humility to be a message of deliverance from the evils emerging from the denominational pattern in America. This was a new America where the church was disestablished. It was a free market, and anybody could start a church. The chaos and bickering of the new pattern disturbed many Christians, and many became argumentative.

Burkholder saw the need for more humility in Christians' relationships with each other. The opening sentence of his introduction to the *Address* declared:

The chief motive [for producing] this work is the present declining state of the Christian Church in which there is such a great difference in the performance of external worship: as also in the external demeanor of its members towards each other; as one has still some fault to find with his neighbor – thus following his own will and inclination....¹

Many persons, Burkholder wrote a bit later, saw "the present state of Christendom as a Babel." All of this he said was contrary to what the Apostle Peter had written: "All of ye be subject to one another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the Humble."² (1 Peter 5:5) Burkholder was addressing a problem in the American context. Thus, it was a message for the larger society, not just a message for Mennonites. He offered humility as a means for church renewal, not just for purifying his own group.

Burkholder went on to build an all-embracing theology of humility. He was not a systematic theologian; he was a pastor. However, the *Address* does come together to create a holistic understanding of what Christ was about and how we are to follow Christ.

In his first chapter, Burkholder called his reader to repentance. Repentance meant changing the heart to an attitude of humility. He wrote: "The fruit of true repentance grows in a change of heart, for the heart of man by nature is proud and conceited; but the heart of a penitent is humble and contrite." The repentant heart, Burkholder emphasized, "imitates the virtues of our Savior while on earth," who described himself as "meek and

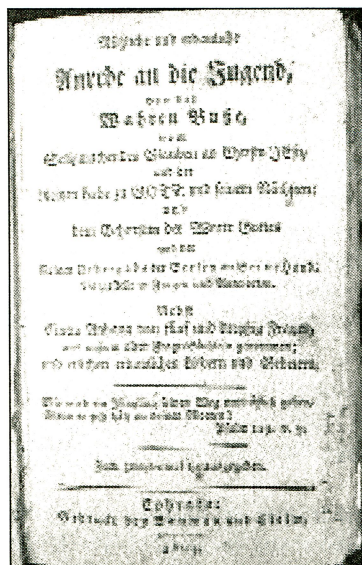
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A message for young people: title page of Burkholder's 1804 treatise on humility. (Credit: Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen, Indiana)

lowly in heart." The one who truly listens to the Word of God, Burkholder went on to say, becomes "converted; namely, from pride to humility, from incontinence to chastity, from hatred to love, ...from...lying and cheating to truth and honesty."³ When Burkholder looked at Christ, he saw the meek and humble and submissive Christ, not Christ as a mighty warrior. Burkholder explained to his young hearers:

In the days of His incarnation, Christ set the pattern of a lamb, and thus by endurance, suffering, and patient submission, yea, by suffering the most painful and ignominious death on account of us sinners, He gained a triumphant victory over the world, sin, death, and the devil.⁴

There was triumph, but it was triumph through being lamb-like.

Burkholder also wrote extensively on the nature of the new birth. He called people not so much to Christ's sacrifice on the cross as to the example of Jesus in his manger.

Christ has given us in His birth a pattern of true humility. Thither, namely to His manger, we are to

direct our course. Indeed He has given us in His birth, doctrine, and life, an example of childlike humility.⁵

From that basic understanding of Christ and Christ's incarnation, Burkholder went on to make many applications for the Christian life. He made the humility attitude a part and parcel of nonresistance. In fact, nonresistance and humility become inseparable Siamese twins.

Burkholder applied humility to politics. He maintained that the humble did not wish to be politically powerful and exert their will over others the way the rulers of this world do. As for more personal applications, he insisted that an inner attitude of humility would bring an outward appearance of humility in attire and demeanor. In regard to worship, Burkholder viewed with skepticism the revivalist emphasis on giving a personal testimony concerning one's own religious experience. To him such testimonies so often seemed egotistical and prideful.

Thus without being a systematic theologian, Burkholder offered a quite coherent and holistic set of theoretical and practical understandings of the meaning of Christ's

incarnation, example, and death, and of what Christian faithfulness was all about. He set it forth in basic, clear, understandable language, as a good pastor uses when counseling an earnest, inquiring youth.

As I have tried to emphasize, Burkholder saw his book as a message of renewal – and renewal not just for Mennonites, but for all of

American Christianity. Burkholder's outlook became so dominant that it really became the major Mennonite formulation of the faith for the next sixty or seventy years. Thus in 1980 a young scholar, Joseph C. Liechty, could publish a landmark article in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* with the title, "Humility: The Foundation of Mennonite Religious Outlook in the 1860s."

In his studies, Liechty focused on another nineteenth-century Mennonite leader, John M. Brenneman of Elida, Ohio. Brenneman was much more than a local leader. If there was any person at mid-century who was a continental Mennonite leader, it was Brenneman. His family had come from Virginia, and he had many contacts there. But far more importantly, the railroads were coming and people were moving to the frontier. There were scattered little groups of Mennonites and Amish struggling on the frontier and needing pastoral care. Brenneman traveled extensively to provide pastoral help to these scattered folk. He

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went from place to place to help with various types of church problems. He had friends everywhere. One friend he wrote to frequently was preacher Peter Nissley of

Mount Joy, in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

Brenneman wrote his own small book of humility theology, *Pride and Humility*, published in 1868. Its basic theology was very much like that of Christian Burkholder. Again, Brenneman made many practical applications for life in nonresistance, political attitude, dress and demeanor,

even behavior at the table. Like Burkholder, John M. Brenneman was interested in church renewal and outreach. He supported the young John F. Funk in his advocacy of Sunday school.

I have heard Joseph Liechty refer to John M. Brenneman as a "spiritual genius." Both Liechty and I think that we found in the humility era a deep and vital faith, a deep and vital spirituality, a profound and vital understanding of Jesus Christ. But when we say that, we run against the grain of most historical interpretations of early nineteenth-century Mennonitism. Historians and other commentators who have written about that period have often used phrases such as "dead and formal," "unenlightened," "moribund," or, to use the words of historian Samuel F. Pannabecker, the "dark ages."

Well, what about the "dark ages" thesis? I looked at that when I wrote *Peace, Faith, and Nation*. What I found was that whereas various writers have used the "dark ages" idea, they have not agreed on what made those ages dark. Robert Friedmann in his *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries* wrote as if the problem was a matter of straying from pristine Anabaptism. Pannabecker pointed mainly to decline in literacy and a lack of progressive outlook. He suggested that Mennonite leaders were really more literate when they came over from Europe than they were a hundred years later, and the nineteenth century was a low point. Reformers touched by revivalism, like Daniel Kauffman and J.S. Hartzler in their book *Mennonite Church History*, spoke of dead "formalism," a lack of fervor, and failure to be active for mission. Others such as the Reformed Mennonites and Jacob Stauffer, who were inclined to be Old Order, had been sure that the deterioration came about due to lack of discipline. Old Order reformers

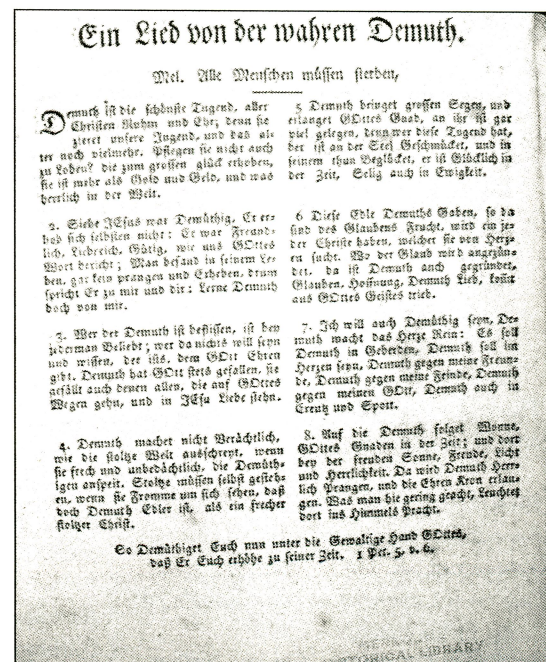
believed that the church would achieve deeper spirituality through discipline. Today we often hear these set against each other. If you have a strong church discipline, that is legalism and that is not spiritual. But the Old Orders believed discipline was the path to spirituality.

My point is that quite a few different voices have agreed that the first three-fourths of the nineteenth century were the "dark ages" of Mennonite history. Yet, when we look a little more closely, they do not agree about what made them dark. So the dark ages charge is not one charge but many. In short, the various "dark ages" interpretations rest on the different authors' beginning assumptions and on the biases they have brought to the subject as much as on the evidence. Now we all bring our biases or orientations to the writing of history, and so I do not mean to be harsh with these writers with whom I disagree. Still, I think they did bring quite a bit of preconception to their writing. I would also add that one other reason the period has been treated poorly in history is that there is a bias in a written culture against a people who express themselves primarily in an oral way. This was a period in which most people expressed themselves in an oral way or through their folk culture. Most did not write clearly. For those of us who come later and look at the documents, this establishes a bias against them. We look at them as not very educated if they could not articulate or write down what they believed.

However, I offer a third comment, in which I am more critical of the humil-

ity era thinkers. I believe that one major charge against the humility period of Mennonite history is true. That is, it did not take seriously enough the idea of proclamation. The advocates of humility did not take seriously enough the Great Commission or the understanding that Jesus came to proclaim the coming Kingdom of God, and that Christ left us, his followers, with the task of carrying through in that proclamation. They did not take seriously enough the mandate to be prophetic.

These people did have a message that American society needed. The United States was an aggressive and bragging society. It got into the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Civil War, and it pushed back the Indians. It needed the message of humility and the idea that Christ offered another way. So my assumption is that the humility message had great possibilities for being prophetic. A prophetic message of humility was needed in the society where the advocates of humility lived.



A hymn of Enduring Beauty published in Burkholder's book: "Humility is the most beautiful virtue." (Credit: Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen, Indiana)

But there is a built-in dilemma in proclaiming a humility theology. How can we actively preach a humility theology? For the humble, the temptation is to be self-effacing and to draw inward. I fear the humility generation did not solve that dilemma. They grabbed one horn of the dilemma by being personally humble and even making a great virtue of it. Personally, I agree that this is important. Still, they almost entirely let go the other horn of proclaiming.

Even John M. Brenneman never brought the two together. He was interested in missions and in humility theology, but he did not integrate the two into a complementary whole. Neither

did the next generation of Mennonite Church reformers of the nineteenth century. An example of this failure is John S. Coffman, the great revivalist of the "Quickening" generation. I think that in his own personal life he brought them together very well. I have great admiration for what I see when I read John S. Coffman's letters and diaries or when I read what other people wrote to him, especially how he gave advice to young people. He had a great deal of humility and integrity. Yet, he did not get it built into his message or his theology. He did not know how to bring a vigorous evangelistic message and have the humility emphasis built into it. Instead, he and his generation to a great extent borrowed from Protestant concepts of what the gospel and salvation were. They grafted them onto Mennonitism in certain ways but did not really build on the foundation of the humility theology that they had inherited.

Humility theology . . . seems quite foreign to our day and age. But then it was foreign also to the spirit of the America that took up the War of 1812, that ruthlessly pushed back the American Indians, and that embraced Jacksonian democracy.

This dilemma was the great challenge. This is what I meant when I said I could have given this lecture the title of "What Might Have Been." What if the reformers of the "Quickening" generation had met the challenge and had worked out the dilemma? Humility theology had a message that American culture needed – one very relevant for proclaiming the values of the gospel and the Kingdom of God in the American


context. It intertwined with and reinforced very well Mennonite nonresistance and Mennonite insistence on practical applications of faith to life. I am not saying the "Quickening" generation lost the emphasis entirely. Yet, they did not get their

gospel message and how to live put into one way of thinking. Suppose they had built a more activist, outreaching, proclaiming version of the faith, but on a foundation that still remembered the humility theology. I do believe that they would have put the Mennonite Church on a better footing for the twentieth century. That was the dilemma.

What of our present generation at the turn of the twenty-first century? Is humility theology even worth talking about? It seems quite foreign to our day and age. But then it was foreign also to the spirit of the America that took up the War of 1812, that ruthlessly pushed back the American Indians, and that embraced Jacksonian democracy.

Moreover, today we have one further obstacle to overcome: the personality theories of current pop psychology books found even in many Christian bookstores. From pop psychology's

point of view humility theology is very bad. A strong idea of pop psychology is to not suppress the individual spirit. The assumption is that we violate the personality if we ask persons to be humble or submissive. Pop psychology says we should encourage people to assert themselves. Well, I do believe that an emphasis on humility can be very damaging. This is especially true if it is imposed unjustly from the outside by some people who have power on other people who do not. It can easily be misused. In those cases it can be devastating to the human spirit and to the kind of shalom that God wills for each of us. This misuse is what gives pop psychology its appeal.

So if our generation wants to take humility theology seriously, we face some real roadblocks. First, we live in a culture which has another model of what persons ought to be. We still have the old dilemma the Mennonite reformers of exactly a hundred years ago faced. How do we express humility and at the same time be active and assertive in proclaiming the gospel? It is a challenge, but one I suggest is well worth taking up. I would be most happy if in 2004 (200 years after the publication of Burkholder's book) a new Christian Burkholder would arise, or maybe if some Italian-American or Hispanic-American Mennonite, or even better yet a third-world Mennonite would write a new humility address and get a new humility discussion going. 

—Schlabach is retired from teaching American history at Goshen College. Burrowed in at the archives, he is currently writing a biography of Guy Hershberger.

This article is an edited transcript of Schlabach's address given at the annual meeting of the Mennonite Historical Association of the Cumberland Valley, November 19, 1996. It was originally published in the Conococheague Mennonist, the association's newsletter (Vol. V, No. 1, January 1997).

The Professor and the Dean

by C. Norman Kraus

In his biography of Harold S. Bender (1897-1962), Albert Keim wrote, “‘The Bible Department is becoming quite weak,’ he [Bender] told Wenger. ‘We cannot afford to have Norman Kraus become the chairman, and no one else is ready.’” Then Keim adds, “Bender was concerned about Kraus’s theological stance” (pp. 505-06). Now, some forty years later, the current changes on the Mennonite theological scene make a further explanation of the content of this “theological stance” desirable for the record.

Business sessions of the Bible faculty, which included all teachers in the college Bible and the Th.B. program, during 1953-60 was dominated by Bender’s plans to upgrade the Th.B. to a graduate seminary degree. This required that the Bible faculty be divided into undergraduate and graduate divisions, and the accreditation association did not approve of graduate teachers teaching in the college Bible curriculum. The “weakness” of the Bible department in the early 1960s that Bender indicates simply refers to the fact that most of the teachers in what had been a combined college Bible and theological seminary faculty had been shifted to the newly separated seminary, leaving the undergraduate Bible department inadequately manned.

While Bender was busy forming the new seminary organization, curriculum, and faculty, he insisted on also remaining the chairman of the college Bible Department. Unfortunately in his zeal to form an independent seminary he had not given the needed attention to forming a strong Bible faculty or to developing an under-

graduate curriculum. He made it clear that he expected J. Lawrence Burkholder and me to continue as teachers in the Bible department. Presumably Burkholder would be the chairman of the department. But at the time of his remark to Wenger (1960) Burkholder was leaving for Harvard and I would not return from Duke University for another year. The faculty for the coming year would be largely made up of temporary and part-time teachers.

I do not think there was any suggestion that either Burkholder or I were considered weak teachers, or unqualified for the positions. Indeed, Bender acknowledges in his statement that I am the only one qualified to be chair of the department. That was his problem! In the summer of 1960 I had made a special trip to Goshen to talk with President Mininger and settle the conditions under which I would be willing to return from Duke to teach at Goshen. While I had no qualms about my reputation as a teacher, there was as yet no tenure policy for Goshen faculty, and the “theological” situation was tense. Thus I think Keim’s conclusion that Bender’s problem was my “theological thrust” is most probably correct.

I had received a B.A. degree in Bible from Goshen in 1946, and a B.D. in 1951, and I had been on the faculty since 1951. (Keim incorrectly says that my B.A. was from Eastern Mennonite College.) I had recently received my Ph.D. from Duke, and I was returning to the Bible Department as the lone representative of the 1951 faculty. Even though Bender’s close colleague, Paul Mininger, had become president of the college, and the president’s office retained its special prerogative to reg-

ulate the department, Bender was fearful that I could not be trusted to chair it. So while he was still in charge he arranged for John C. Wenger to stay with the college as chairman of the Bible Department. Positions were still somewhat fluid at that point, so it is not quite clear whether Wenger was being asked to “stay” or to “return” to undergraduate teaching.

I was quite willing to work under the chairmanship of Wenger. We were longtime colleagues and friends, and heading the department was the only possible rationale Bender could give for asking him to move back into undergraduate teaching. As it turned out Wenger was not at all happy to have been left out of the newly formed seminary, and after Bender’s death Mininger arranged for him to move to the theology department of the seminary. Thereupon I became head of the undergraduate department and worked with President Mininger and Dean Carl Kreider to develop curriculum and recruit faculty.

It was no secret that Bender was suspicious of my “theological stance.” I felt that he had distinctly cooled toward me by 1955 when I returned from a year at Princeton Theological Seminary. It was my experience there that made me decide to pursue American religious studies rather than follow his lead into sixteenth-century Anabaptist studies. And it was no secret that he associated me with John W. Miller, a Concern group member and colleague on the Goshen faculty, who, as Keim indicates, was not in Bender’s good graces. He had planned the dismissal of John in a not-too-subtle arrangement: he was to take a leave, and was then not to be hired back.



Dean Bender (bottom right) and Professor Kraus (top, second from left) with the Goshen College Bible faculty, 1951: Tensions "about Kraus' theological stance." (Credit: S.C. Yoder Photograph Collection)

But what were the theological issues? First, I must note that they were only in the most general sense "theological." Orientation or temperament would be a more accurate designation than "stance." I will not try to list the items of tension in any order of chronology or significance. Most of them, as it will be clear with their listing, have long since ceased to be issues in the church.

One of the major causes of tension concerned the concept of the church and church organization. Influenced by the Concern group's theology some of us younger faculty organized a "koinonia group" in which we sought to find renewal and integrity as followers of Christ. Keim refers to this in his biography on pages 469 following. We even had the temerity on one occasion to share the Lord's Supper. Since the group happened to be meeting at my home that evening, and since I was an ordained minister at the time, Bender reminded me that I had seriously overstepped my pre-

rogatives in the Indiana-Michigan Conference. He ticked off the offenses. I had assumed the authority of a bishop. I had not gotten permission from my bishop to have a communion service, and I had not asked permission of the bishop in whose district the event took place. Further, the koinonia group was not a recognized congregational body. Shades of sixteenth-century Zurich! He was very concerned that our group would become a schismatic faction. Ironically, in this situation he was much nearer to Ulrich Zwingli in spirit than he was to Conrad Grebel, the Anabaptist leader whom he idealized in his biography.

In this same vein he one time expressed his disapproval and caution when I urged a large spiritual life conference on campus to give more place and freedom to the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. I made the statement that in effect the traditional Trinity of the Mennonite Church had been "God the Father, Son and Holy

Bible," and that we needed to put more emphasis on the authority of the Spirit. In this connection I had quoted Donald Baillie (*God Was In Christ*, 1948), and he cautioned me about following his theology, although I'm quite certain he had not read Baillie at that point. All this was at least a decade before the charismatic movement impacted the church, and it represented a theological perspective that threatened the authority of church leadership based on "biblical" injunctions.

Further, Bender and my other colleagues knew full well that I had serious questions about the adequacy of the "inerrancy" theory of biblical inspiration on which to ground the authority of the Bible. I had written a paper analyzing the implications and weakness of inerrancy in the mid-fifties that was shared with the faculty in duplicated form, but never published. Then in 1958 I read a paper to a faculty seminar, entitled "The Religious Use of Language," which deeply disturbed Paul Mininger. Of course, by 1960 many of us on the Bible faculty questioned the doctrine of inerrancy, and when the *Mennonite Confession of Faith* was published in 1963 the word itself was dropped. Even John C. Wenger, who had a great deal to do with the formulation of this Confession, was willing to see our doctrinal statement refocused and reworded.

Another area of tension between Bender and me had to do with the limits of academic freedom to examine or debate issues that were considered "liberal." From the reopening of Goshen College in 1924 up until the early fifties, public lectures and discussions of controversial theological topics were carefully circumscribed. For example, during the 1950s public discussion of the theory of evolution was still limited to lectures by anti-evolution speakers. Class texts in the Bible Department were chosen with

extreme care. Dependable classics and reprints were used where possible. Each year for his course in *The Acts* Bender scoured the secondhand bookstores for copies of G. T. Purves, *Christianity in the Apostolic Age* (1900) that had long been out of print.

Books by authors considered “liberal” or “modernist” were excluded from the library shelves lest students find and read them. When I assigned a chapter for collateral reading from a currently published textbook on the New Testament, a chapter that I thought quite acceptable,

Bender reprimanded me, saying, “Don’t you think that the students can read other [non-acceptable] chapters as well?” After I returned from Duke, at an opportune moment I suggested to Bender that the time had come to add liberal and modernist books from an earlier era to the library for purposes of graduate students’ research projects. He cautiously agreed. The number and quality of the library holdings were a major concern of the accrediting agency, and Bender was determined to have accreditation.

This was a time when the academic options of Mennonite scholars were beginning to broaden. Prior to the 1960s Bender had carefully steered his proteges into the right seminaries and graduate schools. He had also suggested what their fields of study should be. In my case he had chosen Princeton for my Th.M. studies, although he had by then begun to have some doubts about Princeton’s theological orientation. While at

Princeton I wrote a Master’s thesis on the rise of dispensational theology in nineteenth-century American Christianity—a movement that had caused much tension and controversy in Mennonite circles as well. Under the tutelage of Professor Lefferts Loetscher I began to see the significance of understanding American

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I, on the other hand, was concerned about theological precision and integrity of expression in the life of the church.”

Christianity and became convinced that its study was of critical importance for twentieth-century Mennonites. Thus when I looked for a graduate school to finish my Ph.D., I looked for both a qualified faculty and library resources to study American church history and theology. I chose

Duke University, a school not on Bender’s recommended list.

Up to the sixties, historical research and teaching of both College Bible and seminary faculty had majored in Mennonite history and the sixteenth century. Now with increasing Mennonite exposure to and participation in American society, I began to realize how little we understood the modern society in which we operated. So I proposed to Bender, who at that time was still head of the Bible department, that upon my return to Goshen College I be allowed to introduce a new course entitled Protestant Christianity and locate the Mennonite History course within this broader context. I also urged that American Church History be made a staple of the new seminary curriculum and offered to teach it. Bender was not supportive of either suggestion although he did agree to let me teach Protestant Christianity in the college, which became a requirement so long as I was at the college.

These were the major issues upon which we had explicit verbal exchange as I remember them. I found out years later that he and other senior colleagues on the faculty had made trips to Illinois to pacify congregational leaders and parents who were upset by student reports about what I and others had said in class, but he never discussed these with me. I was told by some who had been involved in those discussions that he assured them that we “loved the church” and he thought he could keep us under control. If there were other theological issues, I was not aware of them.

“Dean Bender,” as I knew him was a theological conservative, but not a fundamentalist; a pragmatic churchman more interested in denominational unity than in theological precision; and he was a consummate manager who had no qualms about using others as well as himself for the church as he envisioned it. I, on the other hand, was concerned about theological precision and integrity of expression in the life of the church. And, I must add from this vantage point in history, I was extremely naïve in the realm of church politics. Today I suspect that the scenario might have played out differently. We might actually have sat down and talked over our differences. *L*

—Kraus, former pastor, missionary to Japan, author and professor emeritus at Goshen College, is living in retirement in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

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Conference of Mennonites in British Columbia Archives, 303-3202 Dahlstrom Ave, Clearbrook, BC V2T 2K7, 604 850-6658, Fax: 604 850-9372, E-mail: cmimb@uniserve.com

Conservative Mennonite Conference Historical Committee, Elmer S. Yoder, 1136 S Prospect Ave, Hartsville, OH 44632-8708, 330 877-9566

Delaware Mennonite Historical Association, PO Box 238, Greenwood, DE 19950

Essex-Kent Mennonite Historical Association, 31 Pickwick Dr, Leamington, ON N8H 4T5, 519 322-0456, E-mail: freebru@wincom.net

Freeman Academy Heritage Archives, Cleon Graber, 748 S Main St, Freeman, SD 57029, 605 925-4237

General Conference Mennonite Church, John Thiesen, Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, North Newton, KS 67117, 316 283-2500, E-mail: jthiesen@bethelks.edu

Germantown Mennonite Historic Trust, Randall K. Nyce, 6133 Germantown Ave, Philadelphia, PA 19144, 215 843-0943, Fax: 215 843-6263, E-mail: gmht@aol.com

Hanover-Steinbach Historical Society, Delbert Plett, PO Box 1960, Steinbach, MB R0A 2A0, 204 326-6454

Hans Herr House Museum, Douglas J. Nyce, 1849 Hans Herr Dr, Willow Street, PA 17584, 717 464-4438, Web site: <http://www.hansherr.org>

Heritage Historical Library, David Luthy, 52445 Glencolin Line, RR 4, Aylmer, ON N5H 2R3

Historical Committee and Archives of the Mennonite Church, John E. Sharp, 1700 S Main St, Goshen, IN 46526, 574 535-7477, Fax: 574 535-7756, E-mail: johnes@goshen.edu, Web site: <http://www.goshen.edu/mcarchives>

Howard-Miami Counties Heritage Society Inc., PO Box 156, Greentown, IN 46936, 765 628-2280

Illinois Amish Interpretive Center, Conrad Wetzel, 111 S Locust St, PO Box 413, Arcola, IL 61910, 217 268-3599, 888 45AMISH, E-mail: iaic@one-eleven.net, Web site: <http://www.amishcenter.com>

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Mennonite Heritage Museum, Kristine Schmucker, director/curator, 200 N Poplar, PO Box 231, Goessel, KS 67053, 620 367-8200, E-mail: mhmuseum@futureks.net, Web site: <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/museums/goessel>

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Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia, John Konrad, 211-2825 Clearbrook Rd, Abbotsford, BC V2T 6S3, 604 853-6177, Fax: 604 853-6246, E-mail: office@mhsbc.com, Web site: <http://www.rapidnet.bc.ca/lmennohis>

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Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, Sam Steiner, Conrad Grebel College, Westmount Rd N, Waterloo, ON N2L 3G6, 519 885-0220 ext. 238, Fax: 519 885-0014, E-mail: steiner@library.uwaterloo.ca

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Mennonite Information Center, R. Wesley Newswanger, 2209 Millstream Rd, Lancaster, PA 17602-1494, 717 299-0954, Fax: 717 290-1585, E-mail: menninfctr@desupernet.net, Web site: <http://www.800PaDutch.com/mennctr.html>

Mennonite Library and Archives, John D. Thiesen, 300 E 27th St, North Newton, KS 67117, 316 284-5304, 316 284-5360, Fax: 316 284-5286, E-mail: mla@bethelks.edu, Web site: <http://www.bethelks.edu/services/mla>

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Mifflin County Mennonite Historical Society, Zelda Yoder, PO Box 5603, Belleville, PA 17004, 717 935-5574

Millbank Information Centre, Glenn Zehr, PO Box 35, Millbank, ON N0K 1L0, 519 595-8037, E-mail: megzehr@perth.net

Missionary Church Archives and Historical Collection, Tim Erdel, Bethel College, 1001 W McKinley Ave, Mishawaka, IN 46545, 574 259-8511

Muddy Creek Farm Library, Amos B. and Nora B. Hoover, 376 N Muddy Creek Rd, Denver, PA 17517

North Central Mennonite Conference Historian, Fred Kanagy, 753 Road 523, Bloomfield, MT 59315, 406 583-7782

Northwest Conference Historian, Harry Stauffer, RR 1, Tofield, AB T0B 4J0 403 662-2144

Ohio Amish Library Inc., Paul Kline, 4292 State Route 39, Millersburg, OH 44654, 330 893-4011

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Oregon Mennonite Archives and Library, Margaret Shetler and Charity Kropf, 9045 Wallace Rd NW, Salem, OR 97304, 503 363-2000, 503 873-6406

Oregon Mennonite Historical and Genealogical Society, Jerry Barkman, 9045 Wallace Rd NW, Salem, OR 97304, 503 363-2000, 503 873-6406

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Pequea Bruderschaft Library, 176 N Hollander Rd, Gordonville, PA 17529

Pioneer Mennonite Adobe House Museum, David F. Wiebe, 501 S Ash St, Hillsboro, KS 67063, 316 947-3775, 316 947-3506

Saskatchewan Mennonite Brethren Archives, Bethany Bible Institute, Hepburn, SK S0K 1Z0

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The Peace and Anabaptist Library,
314 E. 19th St, New York, NY
10003, 212 673-7970, Fax: 212
673-7970, Web site: http://www.mennohouse.org/PAL_FAQ.html

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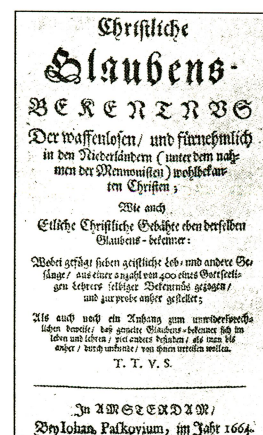
I Wish I'd Been There: Deliberations of Fifty-one Ministers at Dordrecht

by Elmer S. Yoder

I wish I could have been present for the deliberations and signing of the Dordrecht Confession in Dordrecht, Holland, 1632. It was at a peace convention held on April 21, 1632 that the document was entitled *A Declaration of the Chief Articles of our General Christian Faith*. Fifty-one ministers of the Word of God signed it. Why do I wish I had been at this meeting? According to Irvin S. Horst, when it first appeared in print it bore the title, "Confession and Peace-Agreement at Dordrecht."

I wish I had been there:

- To hear the range of discussion and to observe in what ways this was a document of compromise, or peace, among the Mennonites of the Lowlands and northern Germany. Perhaps we could have learned some secrets in the formulation of a peace agreement in the 21st century.
- To detect the surfacing of any regional differences, and particularly any reference to the highlanders (Swiss brethren) and questioning whether they would or would not agree with the document.
- To observe the order of procedure, almost a quarter of a millennium before *Robert's Rules of Order* was published in 1876.
- To detect any reference or comment in its formulation or conclusion, direct or indirect, about the anticipated longevity of the usefulness of the document.
- To aid in determination of why the woman's veiling and the place of women in the church did not find itself in the confession. Were any women observers present?
- To learn if there were attempts made to introduce any additional sub-



Title page of confession—The first German edition (1664) of the Dordrecht Confession: a document of compromise or peace? (Credit: Mennonite Encyclopedia Photo Collection)

jects or articles, and what they might have been.

- To observe what forms of address were used by the leaders among themselves during the discussion. How did they select the foreman or leader?
- To learn if they consciously or unconsciously clustered the eighteen articles to the three fundamental propositions: (1) the church is made up of regenerated people; (2) the Christian can take no part in temporal government; and (3) the Christian must withdraw himself from the rest of the world. *D*

—Elmer S. Yoder is a Conservative Mennonite Conference minister and conference historian, a retired school teacher, former editor of the conference periodical (*Brotherhood Beacon*), editor of *Heritage* which focuses on Stark County, Ohio and author of numerous books, including *The Beachy Amish Mennonite Fellowship Churches* and *I Saw It in The Budget*.

I Wish I'd Been There: Searching for Unity

by **Mary Eleanor Bender**

The time was August 1944, the place, Goshen College. The occasion was a special session of the Mennonite General Conference called because of conflict threatening the whole church. As World War II was relentlessly altering the rest of the world, it was changing Mennonites, who had had new and broadening experiences in Civilian Public Service and overseas relief.

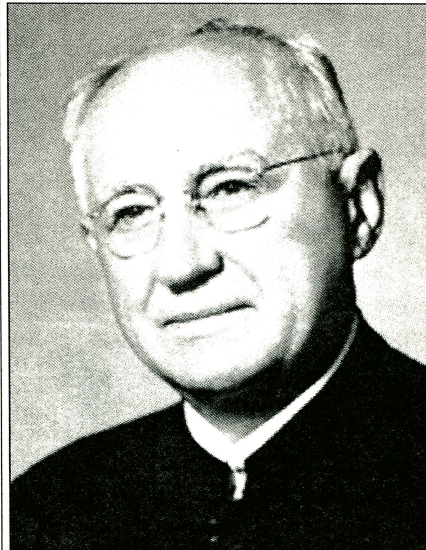
The problem was how to find unity between the old guard and the new. More specifically, the questions at hand concerned differing definitions of nonconformity and disagreement on whether General Conference should have authority to discipline local conferences noncompliant with its definitions.

Al Keim writes, "Conservatives saw such discipline as a way of placing the burden on conference, and progressives saw it as preemptive and lacking in pastoral and brotherly process. Confusion overwhelmed the delegates. Tension mounted, and the meeting reached an impasse."

Sanford Yoder, for sixteen years president of Goshen College until his retirement in 1940, "quietly rose to the full length of his six feet three," Guy Hershberger, a lay delegate, wrote in 1985. In his gracious, irenic spirit, expressed through his gentle but deeply resonant voice, he pointed to the real reason for the impasse. The reason lay deeper than the rightness or wrongness of any given point of view. It lay in the disintegration of fellowship into mutual distrust, as

each side ostracized the other.

"When Yoder sat down," continued Hershberger, "there was deathly silence. Had a pin dropped, you could have heard it – until a brother suggested a time of prayer." The dele-



gates knelt for an hour-and-a-half in

Sanford C. Yoder (1879-1975). In his gracious, irenic spirit, expressed through his gentle but deeply resonant voice, he pointed to the real reason for the impasse. (Photo Credit: Sanford C. Yoder Collection)

that sultry August night. When the prayer was over, the "discussion resumed; but this time it was confession more than discussion. One brother confessed that he had spoken unkind words against Sanford Yoder, and now was asking forgiveness. Ever since that occasion this brother has been a different man."

The next morning when the delegates met again, a softened resolution from each side passed easily. The church was free to carry out the work to

which the postwar years called it.

I chose this watershed in twentieth-century Mennonite history for this column not so much for its historical importance – although that was critically decisive – as for the personal and lasting impact it has had on me since as an adolescent I heard of it the next day, and for its usefulness in current Mennonite divisiveness.

Members who are willing to loosen the grip of ego investments in their attitudes and move toward the other side in response to the love and grace of God, can usher in a new day.



For further consultation, see Al Keim's biography of Harold Bender and Guy Hershberger's introduction to Edward, the journals of Edward Yoder.

—Mary Eleanor Bender, Goshen, Indiana, was seventeen at the time of the conference. She taught at Hesston College, 1953-55, and at Goshen College, 1955-87.

More on Plockhoy:

a “Commonwealth of Love and Equality”

by Bart Plantenga

Pieter Corneliszoon Plockoy, founded a short-lived Dutch communitarian settlement (1663-1664) at Zwaanendael on the banks of the Delaware River. This utopian experiment was obliterated by British troops. After years of obscurity, the visionary Plockhoy, “old, blind and destitute,” appeared, with his wife, in Germantown, Pennsylvania. The Mennonite congregation in Germantown took them in and cared for them.

Here are a few quotations and brief snapshots of Plockhoy’s life and thought. A longer article by Plantenga was published in the April 2002 issue of Mennonite Historical Bulletin.

- “Our rules and Laws being few, are to be only for necessity, not to take away anyone’s liberty...” Pieter Plockhoy
- “...the real history of intentional community among Euro-Americans begins with one Peter Cornelius Plockhoy, despite his eminent status as communal leader, [he] remains historically obscure.” (Timothy Miller, “Pieter Cornelius Plockhoy and the Beginnings of the American Communal Tradition,” *Gone to Croatan: Origins of North American Dropout Culture*.)

Plockhoy’s lodestar was his moral compass — compassion for the poor and the eradication of “the great inequality and disorders among men in the world.” This would come about

through the creation of a community of equals, a kingdom of God on earth, aimed at eliminating the unjust gap between rich and poor. Call it Christian communitarianism based on Jesus’ example, benevolent realpolitik, proto-communism, or social democracy, but he made very inter-



The Swaanendael Museum, Lewes, Delaware: a visible reminder of early Dutch influence, and of Plockhoy’s communitarian society. (Copyright 2001 Jeanine Lahey. <http://wilmington.about.com>)

esting stabs at combining utilitarian economics with social ideals, echoing today’s social welfare states. Be competitive, not acquisitive; be compassionate, not ruthless. He hoped that the economic success of his enterprise might serve as the best adver-

tisement for his society. Many of his democratic notions presaged the United States Constitution.

Plockhoy also believed true peace came from shunning material things — living a simple life — like the Mennonites, Amish, Quakers, and Shakers. His ideas regarding a “commonwealth of love and equality” can also be found in English utopian John Bellers’ work which influenced Marx. Plockhoy may also have helped set the stage for experimental societies like the Oneida Community, Richard Owen’s Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers, hippie communes and kibbutzes.

Socialist scholar, H. Quack, considered him the “originator of socialistic and communal views which later led Hawthorne, Thoreau, and Emerson to undertake such a life at Brook Farm,” begun in 1841 in Massachusetts. To these ends he proposed the following:

- Anti-Slavery: “No lordship or servile slavery shall burden our company.” Plockhoy’s anti-slavery declaration preceded by five years the first recognized declaration against slavery by Dutch Quakers in 1668 in North America.
- Separation of church and state: the state should enforce religious liberty and foster an ecumenical society.
- Freedom of thought, speech, and religion: an ecumenical umbrella to allow freedom of religious worship although it was assumed all were practicing Christians. Ministers according to Kort Verhael would not be tolerated in the community, which

would “suffer all sorts of people (of what religion soever [sic] they are) in any one country, as God suffers the same in all the countries of the world.” But some documents of dubious authorship imply that Plockhoy’s ecumenical tolerance uncharacteristically stopped at Jews, Quakers, Puritans, and “stupid believers in the millennium.”

- Education: free progressive education, offered by honest capable “spiritual captains,” would provide “uplift” for all children (rich or poor, girl or boy). All “handicrafters” would be periodically retrained to learn new trades.

- Health care: free for the poor, the sick, and elderly. The wealthy paid a fee for medical assistance.

- Leisure: “personal interests, desires, and pleasures” were left to discretion of individual. Plockhoy believed work was meant for travel and edification, not for wealth.

- Workday: six hours daily six days per week for the commune; any overtime was for one’s own gain. Non-members seeking admission worked twelve hours per day until they were allowed entry.

- Charity: The colony was created for “the relief of many aggrieved and languishing families.” The wealthy in the colony would display wealth through their extra benevolence toward the poor. Everyone was guaranteed basic needs: shelter, education, food, employment.

- Employment: empower the poor through gainful work. People working for the common good would lead to the end of human exploitation.

- Management: all members had a chance to manage various socio-economic sectors, assuring that members gained a variety of skills. Maids and

housewives had their prescribed functions but also time to develop new skills. This promoted division of labor as well as communal values and self-reliance.

- Private property: would be allowed but the commune would own land and industries collectively. Overtime meant discretionary income.

- Communistic individualism: Although members “shared equally in the labor and its products” he allayed fears that his system would squelch individualism: “the common welfare should be kept in mind without restricting anyone’s personal and natural liberty... To suppress the individual by force, as is usually the practise in the world, is according to our opinion merely deferring the larger evil and making it break out more violently.” All would benefit from profits equally among settlers. Every six months surpluses were to be equally distributed.

- Competitiveness: Plockhoy was keen to prove that his benevolent system could compete in the world market. Success meant being more enterprising and industriousness. His artisans would produce higher quality goods because of the level of craftsmanship assured by social well-being. He envisioned their products would undersell the competition because of low overhead of their social arrangements.

- Marriage: Marriage outside the community was allowed

- Departures: those leaving would not be punished and received their portion of profits and belongings. If there were no profits they would receive an honorarium.

- Democracy: governor was chosen by settlers for one-year term to prevent corruptibility. He would have three elected administrators to assist

him.

- Town planning: • “meeting-places” with amphitheater seating arrangement and desk tops to write ideas and read and discuss Scripture in an open and egalitarian manner.

- Housing: settlement comprised of two dwellings: one inland for twenty to thirty families engaged in industry and agriculture. Another located near the river where he envisioned fisheries and a fleet of trading vessels “to send to Flanders, Holland, France and other places...” Settlers would live in a mix of private family rooms and public space [library, guestroom, playrooms, and school]. Plockhoy wanted it active and dynamic — open spaces for freedom and convenient for meetings as well as quiet sanctuaries and an area for a market. His ideas for a central kitchen area, central heating and light were important modern contributions.

- Meals: would be communal meaning less energy and time spent building many small fires for heat and cooking.

- Simple life: free of baubles and shows of wealth, or “painful and laboursome inventions” obscured the notions of a good and natural life.

Although there are those who insist it was his religious training as a Mennonite that informed his ideas, Plockhoy himself wrote that religion was an activity “with which in general [I am] not concerned.” But, yet, it is undeniable that on some level he was able to subtly synthesize the dynamics of his new found and rational social activism with his religious legacy and require that the pragmatic coexist in harmony with the teachings of Jesus.

— *Plantenga* (ninplant@xs4all.nl), Amsterdam, The Netherlands, is a freelance writer and editor.

The Back Page

The new era is upon us. February 1, 2002 is the official birthday of Mennonite Church USA—and of its Historical Committee.

To prepare to serve the new church, the Transformation Team of MC USA appointed a six-member committee—the Historical Committee Transformation Group. Rachel Waltner Goosen, Topeka, Kan., served as chair. Other members were Sue Biesecker-Mast, Bluffton, Ohio, James Juhnke and John Thiesen, North Newton, Kan., John D. Roth and John E. Sharp, Goshen, Ind.

The group designed a program proposal for the Historical Committee (HC), which was accepted and affirmed by the Transformation Team. The new program includes: administering two denominational archives, assisting and directing research that will include People of Color, supporting local and regional historical groups, and promoting her-

itage and identity. The Transformation Team has also asked the HC to take a more active role in interpreting history in a way that will help engage the church in discussions of current issues.

There are two major structural changes. The HC will have a stronger link to the Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA. The Executive Board will now appoint the HC director. The other major change is the partnership with the Mennonite Library and Archives (MLA) at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan. The HC will assume responsibility for the operation of the archives por-



The Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA, with the North Newton staff, October 2001. Left to right, first row: James Lynch, Assistant Archivist, LeeRoy Berry; Kimberly Schmidt, Nate Yoder, Chair. Second row: James Juhnke, Susan Fisher Miller, Beth Graybill, and John Thiesen, Archivist. Top row: Franklin Yoder and John D. Roth. (Photo by John E. Sharp, Director.)

tion of the MLA. Consequently, there will now be two denominational archives—North Newton, Kan. and Goshen, Ind. The HC and its staff are ready and eager to serve the new church. *J*

—jes

Visit our web sites at www.goshen.edu/mcarchives/ and www.bethelks.edu/services/mla

Mennonite Historical Bulletin

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No. 2

A Petition to the President in a Time of War

America is at war—once again. This time President Bush has declared war on terrorism, an enemy more elusive than clearly bordered nations. Unlike the divisive Vietnam War, most Americans approve of the current military action, some Mennonites among them. How can Christians, who want to maintain a legacy of nonviolence, respond to the new wave of patriotism?

A look at history can be instructive. We've been here before. In 1862, during the war America declared on itself, Mennonite bishop John M. Brenneman (1816-1895), Allen County Ohio, wrote a petition to President Abraham Lincoln. It is not clear that this classic statement on nonresistance ever reached Washington, but the petition was preserved, and later discovered by Wilmer D. Swope, Columbiana, Ohio.

Brenneman sent the petition with an accompanying letter to Jacob Nold (1765-1834, Columbiana County, Ohio). In the letter Brenneman wonders if too much confidence is being placed in the president. After all, he writes, even the president is "But a poor dying mortal like ourselves, and if we lean entirely upon him for help, I fear we would lean on a broken reed."—jes

(Allen County, Ohio)
August the 19th, 1862

A Petition to Mr. Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States:

We, the undersigned, heartily wish unto our most noble President grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and of the Lord Jesus Christ. May the good Lord abundantly bless the President with wisdom and knowledge from on high and enable him to rule this our great nation with prudence.

We would humbly pray the President not to consider us too burdensome by presenting to him this, our weak and humble petition, thereby humbly praying and beseeching him to take into consideration our sore distress.

We would herewith inform the President that there is a people, scattered and living mostly in the northern parts of the United States – Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, Indiana-and some few in Illinois and Iowa – called Mennonites, who are greatly distressed at the present time



"We therefore beseech our good President to favor us in this respect and not allow us to be forced or compelled to take up arms against our consciences, as we would thereby have to renounce our faith and break our promise to God, who alone has power over our consciences."

(Photo credit: US News and World Report, 200 Years: A Bicentennial Illustrated History of the United States, 1973.)

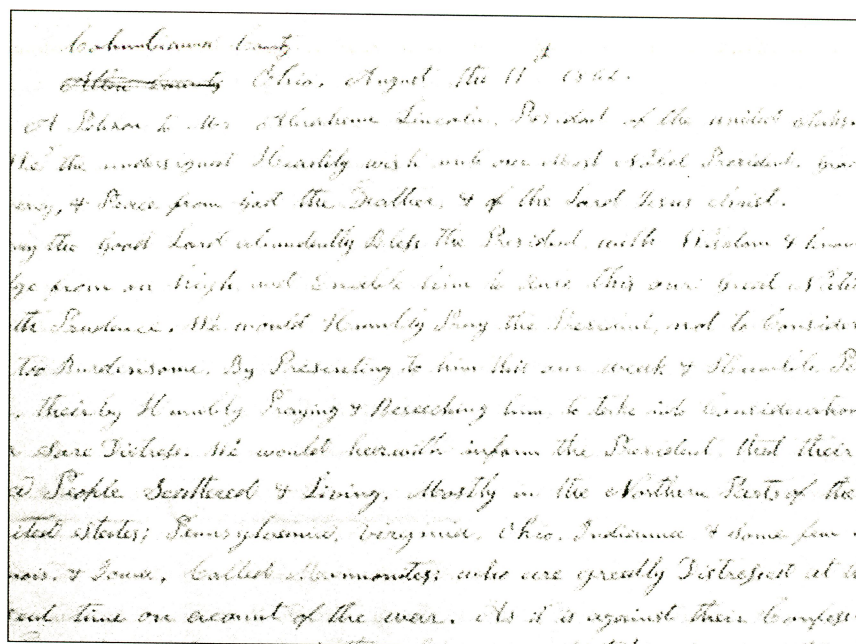
on account of the war. As it is against their Confession of Faith and also against their conscience to take up arms therewith to destroy human life, the President must not mistake us to be secessionists or rebels against the government, as we are entirely free from that guilt.

The Mennonites are generally, as far as we know, in favor of, and well-wishers to, the Union. We greatly abhor the present rebellion against the Government, and the Mennonites would certainly be among the last to rebel against so good a government as that of the United States. We would say, that if any of our brethren should be found guilty of this rebellion or [of] aiding any of those who are engaged therein, then let them be dealt with as rebels. We would be far from holding such as brethren in our church. Would to God that we were all as clear from all guilt as we are of the present rebellion, or of being secessionists.

We consider it a great duty earnestly and heartily to pray for the President and for all who are in authority under him, that the Lord God might bless them in their administration and help and aid them in restoring peace and harmony again in our once-favored land, and in upholding the government – as we believe and acknowledge that government is an ordinance and institution of God, a power ordained by Him, to promote and establish good policy, rules, and laws among nations, in lands and in cities, and to be a terror to the evil and a praise to the good, and that thereby civility, morality, peace and concord be supported in the world,

and without which the world that lieth in wickedness could not subsist. It is therefore the unbounded duty of all faithful Christians to be subject to higher powers, not only for fear of punishment, but rather for conscience's sake, and to submit to those who have the rule over them, with due respect and reverence as good subjects to obey them in all the ordinances and laws of men that do not

militate against the Word of God, and render to all their dues – tax, custom, and toll – with a ready mind and without murmuring and repining; also with humility of heart to make supplication, prayer, and intercession for all that are in authority, and thus implore God for the prosperity, welfare, and happiness of the land, the community, and the place of their residence.



Adams County, Ohio, August the 11th 1862.
 A Petition to Mr. Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States.
 We the undersigned heartily wish our dear & Beloved President, peace
 and Peace from God the Father, & of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 May the good Lord abundantly bless the President with Wisdom & knowl-
 edge from on high and enable him to save this our great & Beloved
 the Republic. We would humbly pray the President, not to consider
 too burdensome, by presenting to him this our weak & humble Peti-
 tion, thereby humbly praying & beseeching him to take into consideration
 & care the People scattered & living, mostly in the Northern Parts of the
 West states; Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, Indiana & some from
 Iowa, & Iowa, called Mennonites; who are greatly distressed at the
 present time on account of the war. As it is against their Confession

Brenneman's handwritten petition: "We would herewith inform the President that there is a people . . . called Mennonites . . ." And "it is against their Confession of Faith and also against their conscience to take up arms therewith to destroy human life . . ."

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Microfilms of Volumes I-L of the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* are available from ProQuest Information and Learning, 300 N Zeeb Rd, PO Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346.

But as I have mentioned before let us
be careful not to put too much confidence
in man, our God is certainly more to
be depended on, than the President, as he is
a Father of mercies and a Father pitieth
his children, so God pitieth them that fear
him. God has all power in Heaven and
Earth, and what is the President? But a
Poor trying mortal like ourselves, and if
we lean entirely upon him for help, I
dare we would lean on a broken Reed.
I do not say that it is entirely wrong to
make application to him in such a time
of trouble, as Paul also made application
to Caesar, when in Prison at the time.
But first of all let us flee to God who

Cover letter to Jacob Nold: "But as I have mentioned before, let us be careful not to put too much confidence in man. Our God is certainly more to be depended on than the President, as he is a Father of mercies and as a father pitieth his children, so God pitieth them that fear him. God has all power in heaven and earth."

And should it be that such Christians were, for [the sake of] the Word of God, persecuted by the Government, so as to forfeit their property or to suffer death, they would not be allowed (in the Mennonite Church) to calumniate, slander or defame, or with weapons of war to oppose or resist; but by faith to look up to God, to whom vengeance belongeth, and seek comfort of Him, and eternal blessings beyond the grave.

And in case the government will, from [i.e., in line with] Christian principles, allow freedom of conscience in all points to believers, so that they may worship God in their religious ordinances according to their truth and the voice of conscience; then they should be the more gratefully submissive and obedient – which we feel in duty bound to do, in all points that go not against the

voice of conscience and the doctrines of Christ.

We therefore beseech our good President to favor us in this respect and not allow us to be forced or compelled to take up arms against our consciences, as we would thereby have to renounce our faith and break our promise to God, who alone has power over our consciences.

We sincerely hope and trust that the President and the Government will bear us with patience; as we would by no means wish to censure, judge, or condemn other denominations or Christian professors who differ from us in their faith and practice, leaving that between them and God to decide, as everyone must give an account of himself to God. We wish simply and sincerely with all our heart to do the will of God, our heavenly Father, as well as we can and know how, and as

much as lieth in us to live peaceably with all mankind, but by no means to aid or uphold any in rebellion or wickedness.

We feel truly grateful and thankful to God and the Government, for the Christian privileges which have hitherto been granted to us in the United States, and we humbly pray God and the Government that the same might still be granted to us in the future, that we might still be allowed to exercise ourselves unmolested in the liberty of conscience, to worship our God agreeably to our feelings. Of this liberty we would most thankfully accept.

But we do by no means expect or ask to be entirely screened from the burden of the war. But we pray and beg for God's sake that the liberty may be granted us to pay a fine when drafted, instead of taking up arms. This privilege has been granted to the Mennonites heretofore, in the United States in time of war. Our brethren in Canada have also been exempt from military duties by paying an extra tax. So likewise in Europe they are generally allowed the same privilege. Our Mennonite brethren in Eastern Virginia have been taken by force by the rebels, some of them tied and loaded on wagons, and hauled off to the Rebel Army. But as they would not fight for them upon any conditions they were kept awhile as prisoners, and finally sent home by laying a heavy fine upon them, besides [an additional] two percent [tax] on all their property, as we have been informed. Now we have the confidence in our President and his officers that they are fully as kind and merciful (and we trust much more so) as they of the South.


We would not prescribe to the President how to deal with us. But we humbly pray and beseech him that upon some terms or other we may be allowed our religious liber-

ty. Should it be deemed proper to lay an extra tax upon all of us and our sons as are considered fit subjects for military duties or so much percentage on all their property, we will not murmur or complain at all. We feel that we are dependent creatures: depending upon the mercy of God and also upon the mercy of the President and the governors.

We would also herewith promise to be liberal and charitable to those poor women and children whose husbands and fathers are gone to the army, if they are in needy circumstances; as we deem it especially incumbent upon all Christian professors to be kind-hearted to all the needy and helpless.

We hope and pray that the President will be so kind as to issue immediate orders to the several governors of those states wherein the Mennonites reside, instructing the governors to be favorably inclined to us poor creatures of the dust – especially to the governor of Ohio, as the Mennonites in Ohio seem to be in the most danger. By so doing the President would do us a great favor, never to be forgotten, and we hope and pray that God the judge of all the earth will richly reward him for the same, with an unfading crown of glory.

We are your humble servants, most respectfully.

May God bless the President with all needful blessings is our sincere prayer. Amen. 

This petition is from the Jacob Nold Collection, Mennonite Church USA Archives—Goshen, Ind., and was first published in the Mennonite Historical Bulletin, October 1973, pp. 2-3.

Recent Publications

Bergen, Isaac. *Isaak & Helene Derksen family.* Order from author: 1675 Gladwin Rd, Abbotsford, BC V2T 5Y5.

Bergen, Isaac. *The George Krahn Family, 1839-1999.* 1999. Order from author: 1675 Gladwin Rd, Abbotsford, BC V2T 5Y5.

Family book: *Gerhard Ens, 1844-1911.* 1998. Order from: Katherine Martens, 701 Patricia Ave, Winnipeg, MB R3T 3A8.

Frey, Vincent J. *Ancestors and descendants of Harmon Short and Lydia Beck.* 2001. Order from author: 890 Blind Brook Dr, Columbus, OH 43235.

Harder, Leland. *Schardau heritage: Andreas and Aganetha Flaming and their descendants.* 2001. Order from author: 5908A Ivy Dr, North Newton, KS 67117.

Kraus, Harry L. Sr. *Abram P Shenk family history.* 2001. Order from author: 1210-B Harmony Dr, Harrisonburg, VA 22802.

Kraus, Harry L. Sr. *Samuel and Amanda Kraus family history.* 2001. Order from author: 1210-B Harmony Dr, Harrisonburg, VA 22802.

Kraus, Mildred B. and Harry L. Kraus, Sr. *Martin A. Lahman family history.* 1996. Order from authors: 1210-B

Harmony Dr, Harrisonburg, VA 22802.

Kraus, Mildred B. and Harry L. Kraus, Sr. *Martin A. Lahman family history update – July 2000 and corrections.* 2000. Order from authors: 1210-B Harmony Dr, Harrisonburg, VA 22802.

Landis, Regina R. *Descendants of Samuel A. and Barbara W. Landis.* 1999. Order from: Mr. and Mrs. Stanford Landis, 1407 Fritztown Rd, Reinholds, PA 17569.

Miller, Sarah Mae. *Reflections of a family's history: Descendants of John K. Fisher.* 2001. Order from author: 13763 State Road 4, Goshen, IN 46528-9650.

Neufeld, Vernon. *Family of Johan A. Neufeld and Margaretha D. Loewen.* 2000. Order from author: 11600 Judy Ave, Bakersfield, CA 93312-4500.

Töws family history, 1723-1999. 1999. Order from: Katherine Martens, 701 Patricia Ave, Winnipeg, MB R3T 3A8.

More information on these books may be obtained from the Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen College, Goshen, IN 46526; 574 535-7418; e-mail: mhl@goshen.edu

I Wish I'd Been There:

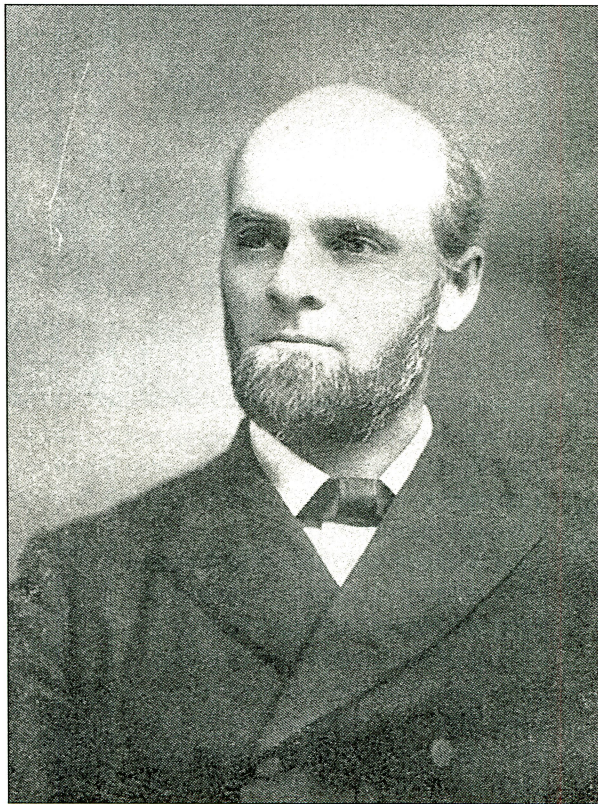
Across the Alley at "The Lambert Place"

by James R. Krabill

Each morning when I step out of the back door to my house in south-central Elkhart (Indiana), my eyes fall upon a dilapidated nineteenth-century, two-story brick dwelling known by a few longtime local residents as "The Lambert Place." It was from this house that George Lambert set forth in 1894 on a world-wide tour that would change the Mennonite church forever. I wish I could have been there to experience firsthand the excitement of those days.

What it was that inspired Lambert to embark on this trip, I'm not sure. But from the book, *Around the World and Through Bible Lands*—Lambert's 417-page travelogue published after the trip—we discover a man with a pioneering spirit, full of curiosity, keenly aware of world developments and deeply convinced that North American Mennonites, living in plenty, should give generously to alleviate human suffering. "It is an act of charity and Christian kindness," he wrote, "to be interested in our brethren beyond the seas; [for God] 'hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth.'"

In the late 1890s, the Lambert farm lane—today, an alley that passes between several houses and borders my property—must have bustled with activity as George Lambert




George Lambert (1853-1928): "It is an act of charity and Christian kindness to be interested in our brethren beyond the seas; [for God] 'hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth.'"

came and went, speaking in various church communities about famine-stricken India and helping to organize a major relief effort in response to the crisis.

This growing world consciousness among Mennonites led to an even more dramatic development when,

on November 4, 1898, fifteen bishops, several ministers and a group of other concerned individuals, gathered for prayer at the Prairie Street church—just one block north of the Lambert home—and, before leaving that place, appointed three individuals to become the first overseas mission workers of the North American Mennonite Church.

As I look at "The Lambert Place" in the year 2002, I sometimes imagine George Lambert standing at the window, gazing out on a world in need. And I wonder how he would respond to the three low-income families currently occupying his old farmstead, trying to make ends meet in what has today become a multi-cultural neighborhood with eighty percent single-parent family units living below the official poverty level. "The world has changed," I hear him saying, "but God's mission of love and compassion goes on." 

— James R. Krabill served with Mennonite Board Missions as a missionary, program administrator, mission educator, and divisional vice president from 1976-2002. On February 1, 2002, he began a new assignment with MBM's successor agency, Mennonite Mission Network, as Senior Executive for Global Ministries.

A Sermon in Response to 9/11: The Price Tag of Fairness

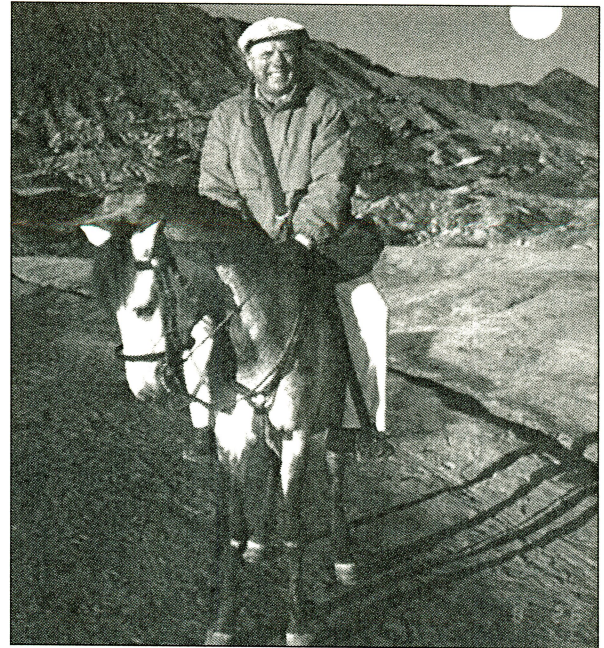
by Melvin D. Schmidt

We were getting on the train in Semarang, bound for Jakarta, and needed some help with our bags. I had stacked them just outside the coach we were boarding. We had taken the same train ride before, and knew that we must be ready with about Rp. 3,000 for the porter. After he stowed our luggage, I offered the porter the usual tip. He refused, demanding more. So I offered him Rp. 5,000. He refused that too. He said I must pay him Rp. 15,000. I was shocked, not only concerning the amount of his demand, but also concerning the fact that he was making a demand on me at all. We had tipped our porters Rp. 3,000 or Rp. 5,000 several times and had never had a problem.

So I dug around in my wallet for Rp. 15,000. The closest I could come was Rp. 20,000. I ended up giving him almost seven times the normal amount. Several rows back, an Indonesian businessman saw this incident unfold. He rose from his seat, came up to me and addressed me in perfect English. "I know this doesn't seem fair to you. I usually pay Rp. 3,000 to the porters when I make this Jakarta run, and they are happy with it. But you are an American. They will not be happy with such a small amount from you. What you paid seems unfair to you, but really, it is fair. You paid him less than two dollars. Wouldn't you have tipped any porter in America two dollars or more for stowing those same bags? I have often traveled in the United States, and I know how tipping is done there."

I received an important lesson from this incident. Why am I connecting this small incident on a train in Semarang with the national tragedy we face today? I am suggesting that some of the same dynamics are at work in both incidents, although admittedly on vastly different scales. The Asians perceive us Americans to have had a free ride for close to fifty years. We bombed the day-lights out of the Vietnamese for twenty-one years, with hardly any hint of damage to ourselves besides the cost of the bombing itself plus fifty thousand US military casualties, compared to the millions of innocent citizens, many of them women and children, that were killed by our bombs and our napalm in Vietnam. For the past ten years we have been continuing our bombing runs in Iraq with total impunity. I have not heard of a single US casualty, yet our country has been raining terror upon countless Iraqi villages.


To Asians and Middle Easterners, the loss of five or ten or even twenty thousand lives, two skyscrapers and one small section of the Pentagon does not seem like an unspeakable price to pay. The Asians and Middle Easterners have lived with infinitely greater losses inflicted by our country upon them.



Seeing Indonesia: Mel Schmidt on horseback, returning from a visit to Brumo in Java, one of the most beautiful active volcanoes in the world.

However, to Americans, the meltdown of the World Trade Center and the attack on the Pentagon are unspeakable crimes. One radio commentator said that on September 11, 2001 America suffered the most casualties on American soil that it has ever suffered since the Civil War almost one hundred and fifty years ago. That observation makes this crime seem unspeakable, yet it also expresses a fact of history: the United States has been involved in two world wars, plus the Korean War, plus the Vietnam War, plus the Gulf War, plus dozens of other minor conflicts, and has never had to pay any price in significant civilian casualties or the disruptions usually associated with the wars. As a people, we have not had to pay the price for the wars in which we have participated. These facts of history are not lost upon

those who hate America. We should never underestimate the profound convictions that these people carry in their hearts. The people who boarded the four flights last Tuesday morning with box cutters in their pockets did so with a commitment to serving justice. We think of them as misguided hoodlums. They thought of themselves as martyrs. They believed that God has a special place reserved in heaven for them because of what they were undertaking to do.

Someone asked the American poet laureate about suggesting an appropriate poem on which to meditate in these terrible times. He said, "You won't do any better than the Psalms." I believe he is right. I meditated on Psalm 11:2, 3: "Look how the wicked bend the bow and fit their arrow to the string, to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart. If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" This ancient text accurately describes terrorism. It acknowledges the fact that terrorism has a terrible price tag attached to it. Terrorism not only kills people. Terrorism destroys the foundations of society, and when those foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? 

—Melvin D. Schmidt, pastor of Hyattsville (Maryland) Mennonite Church, preached this sermon on September 16, 2001. He and Charlotte had just returned from a three-month sabbatical in Indonesia.

Finding friends: Mel and Charlotte, with daughter Kimberly Schmidt, who joined them for a month, found many friends in Bali, Java and Lombok. Kimberly is a member of the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee. She has served since 1995.

Prayer:

God, from the midst of calls for the unleashing of hate,
We call upon you who have called yourself LOVE.
From within the billowing clouds of smoke
We seek you, the light of the world.
From the blood-stained streets of Washington and New York
We seek you, the creator and sustainer of life.
From the nonstop media bringing us the calls for war from our leaders
We seek you, O God, who leads us to the kingdom of peace.

Our prayer today is for the church
And for those who are called to be your people.
Our prayer is for remembrance, not only of those who have given their lives,
But for remembrance of your word, your immutable truth.

"They that take up the sword shall perish by the sword."
"Make friends quickly with your adversary, lest you both be destroyed."
"Love your enemy; pray for those who spitefully use you."

We pray today for those who seek to destroy us,
Even as they may be making plans for yet another attack upon our country.
We pray that they may see the folly of escalating the violence.
Lead them, O God, into other understandings of your will and your pleasure,
For they believe that they are pleasing you in their violent undertakings.

Our prayer for our leaders is the same as our prayer for our enemies.
Lead George W. Bush and Condoleezza Rice as they contemplate
The response our nation must make.
We pray that tragedy may not be compounded with yet another tragedy.

Even in this dark night of the soul
We light our small candles for peace.
Even while we hear the rumblings of war
We listen for the still small whisperings of your Spirit.

May we heed your call to love.
May we seek the path to peace.
We pray in the name of the Prince of peace. Amen.



Two Anabaptists Reflect on a Sojourn in the Heartland of Islam

by Kathy Fisher
and Al Keim

We attended our first Christian service together in Saudi Arabia at the American Embassy. A Presbyterian air force chaplain preached the sermon. His message was entitled, "Why I Believe in Infant Baptism." For Al, only three days in the kingdom, it was a jarring reminder that he was in for some surprises. I, Al's wife for only three weeks, was less upset. I had lived in Saudi Arabia for most of the last twenty years and was aware of the uniqueness of the place!

Al soon learned about the restrictive religious culture of Saudi Arabia. Expatriate Christians meet for worship on Fridays at various embassies, the only legal places for Christian worship. Although there are many underground house groups, there are no visible churches in Saudi Arabia. All religions other than Islam are proscribed. Openly carrying a Bible on the street can get you expelled from the kingdom on twenty-four hours' notice. Or jailed. Or fined, if you are lucky.

Now that the Taliban have been routed, Saudi Arabia is almost certainly the most intolerant and religiously reactionary kingdom on earth. One cannot call it a nation; it really is a kingdom, ruled by a feudal royal family whose possession of power is

rooted in oil and Islam. In terms of their hold on power, Islam is more important than oil. Thus, the king's official title is "Protector of the Two Holy Mosques."

The royal family governs, not by suf-

very useful to Islam, for the Al Saud family is the most lavish donor to Islam in the world today. Last year when Crown Prince Abdullah traveled to North Africa and Latin America, he dedicated numerous mosques, which his family's beneficence had built. The worldwide evangelistic effort of Islam is largely funded by the Saudis in support of conservative Wahhabism.

Saudi society is saturated by Islamic rules and practice. Five times a day the loudspeakers in the minarets call people to prayer. All shops, schools, factories, gas stations close; everything but traffic stops for the half hour of the prayer time. Mosques are being built on almost every street corner so that no one needs to walk more than five minutes from home to pray. Religious police from the "Presidency for the Protection of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice" prowl the streets in GMC

Suburbans, watching for infractions of religious rules.

In most ways Saudi Arabia is more like sixteenth-century Reformation Europe than like modern-day western culture. As modern-day Anabaptists, we mused endlessly on what it means to be followers of Jesus in Saudi Arabia. We asked, for example, what is the content of the "good news" in a society where religion and state are one, and where total intolerance of all religions but Islam is enforced with draconian vigilance? Should we mimic George Blaurock and enter our neighborhood mosque for prayer?



Encountering the Saudi culture: Kathy Fisher with a museum director in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

frage—there has never been an election in Saudi Arabia—but by an arrangement with a group of 200 imams who are the direct descendants of the great eighteenth-century Arabian, the imam Wahhab. In about 1760 Wahhab entered into an alliance with the Al Saud royal family, giving the Al Sauds the right to govern as long as they were willing to promote and protect his particularly rigid and austere form of Islam. This 250-year-old compact is still in force today and is the basis for the royal family's grip on power.

Clearly the vast oil income has been

Should we write letters to the editor of the English-language daily *Arab News* and challenge the Saudi-Islamic gender apartheid?

There was never a lack of opportunity to discuss religious questions with Saudis. We were witnessed to continuously. A story Al loves to tell illustrates the forms such witness often takes.

“On the last day of our stay in Saudi Arabia I needed to run an errand. It was a hot day, 125 degrees Fahrenheit. After walking a block or two I realized I would not be able to make it on foot so I hailed a taxi. As I got in I complained about the heat. The taxi driver immediately wanted to know whether I was a Christian and if I had read the Koran. Learning that I had been reading the Koran, he wanted to know what I thought about it. Did I agree with the Koran?

“Knowing that I had my exit visa safely at the apartment, I made bold to say that I did not find the Koran as interesting as the Bible, and that I

especially disliked the Koranic understanding of women. For the rest of the trip the driver lectured me on the true place of women in the scheme of things, and when I got out he said, ‘When you got into the cab you complained of the heat. You should know that unless you submit to the teachings of Allah in the Koran you will burn in hell and it is 170 degrees hotter in hell than it is here in Riyadh today.’ ”


There are many areas where Anabaptism could inform and become good news for Saudis. It would end the outrageous gender apartheid practiced against women in Saudi Arabia. Women have no legal rights, and almost no opportunity for self-development. Another would be to end capital punishment; two hundred fifty people a year are decapitated for various capital crimes each year in the public squares of Riyadh and Jeddah.

Above all, it would end the corrupting assumption that “might makes right.” Almost all relationships in

Saudi society are based on the dependency of the most powerless on persons more powerful. Power for self-aggrandizement is a fundamental norm of the Saudi social system. Most human beings are tempted by materialistic gratification, but in Saudi society there are almost no norms which at least call into question such an ethic. The meager two-percent tithe, which is one of

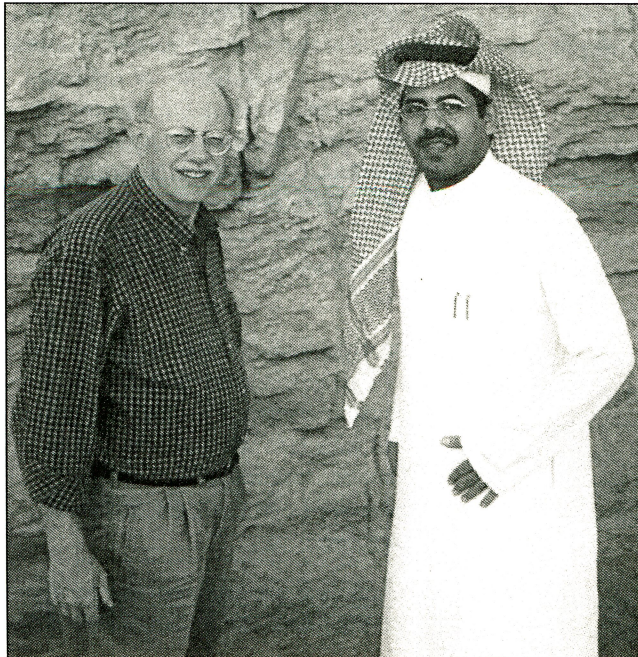
the five pillars of Islam, is a minor challenge to self-gratification.

Anabaptism could help Saudi believers transform their communal (tribal) identities from ethnocentric (“my tribe right or wrong”) to embrace new forms of community which transcend and therefore transform the meaning and practice of their communal ethic. Most of all, Wahhabi Islam needs the transformation of divine grace, and the substitute of agape for the strict, austere legalism of rewards and punishments which lies at the heart of Islam. The remote Allah must become the Allah of love and shalom, the exemplar of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Our challenge in Saudi Arabia was not unlike the dilemma of sixteenth-century Anabaptism: How to build a visible church in a society where no visible church is tolerated? But we are not sixteenth-century Anabaptists; we are circumspect twenty-first-century middle-class Mennonites. Saudi Arabia made us face the reality of how remarkably our understanding of faith requires a culture of tolerance and freedom. In the absence of tolerance and freedom, deliberate acts of kindness, personal witness, and a devotional piety became our modus operandi: Christ in us and through us. 

—Kathy Fisher has spent much of the last twenty years as a teacher in Saudi Arabia. She also served with MCC in Egypt and has taught at Ohio State University. In 2000 she married Al Keim who accompanied her to Saudi Arabia for the 2000-2001 academic year. Keim retired recently, after teaching American history at Eastern Mennonite University for thirty-three years. He is also a past chair of the Historical Committee of the Mennonite Church. Fisher and Keim now live in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Cross-cultural friends: Al Keim and Mubarak, who had visited Harrisonburg, Va., in 1999.



A Pinch of This or That:

Setting the Table in the Shenandoah Valley

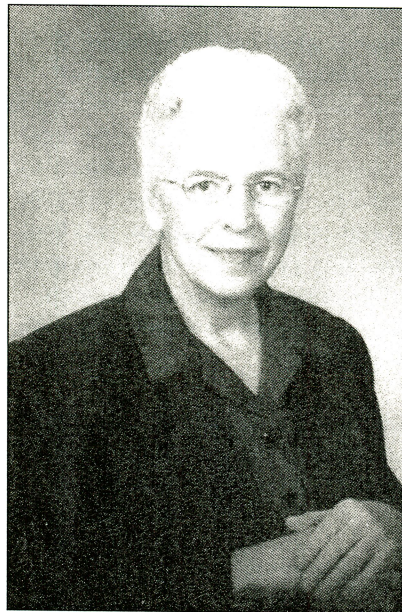
by Esther Shank

I've heard that a recipe for a good speech should contain plenty of shortening, so I'll try to incorporate lots of that here!

A large percentage of European American Mennonite families in the Shenandoah Valley migrated to America from Germany and Switzerland. Most came first to Pennsylvania, but since available land was becoming more scarce, a number of them headed south to Virginia—the earliest around 1728. Our cooking in the Valley was influenced by our roots. Many families were large, and children were considered a financial asset on the farm; their help with chores and household tasks was greatly needed.

I grew up in a family of twelve children. My father was a Mennonite minister so there was a continual flow of guests in our home for meals. Ministers were not salaried in those days, so we children all took over major domestic responsibilities at a very young age. Farmers banded together to help each other during harvest seasons. When threshing grain or filling silo, there would be a dozen to twenty men at the table. At our house, usually Grandmother and maybe one or two of my aunts would come to help us with the food preparation. A typical meal would consist of meat, mashed potatoes and gravy. (You wouldn't think of not having gravy!) The meal included home-made breads, biscuits or corn bread, apple butter and jellies, a couple of vegetable dishes, salads, pickles and relishes, maybe pickled eggs or salad eggs. Then there may be cracker pudding, or tapioca or vanilla pudding

layered with sliced bananas, and real whipped cream, with graham cracker crumbs. And, of course, there would be pies, maybe with homemade ice cream, or maybe gingerbread with whipped cream. The men always looked forward to the good country



Esther Shank: passing on the secrets of Shenandoah Valley cooking to a new generation.

meals. They worked hard and appetites were hearty, so food was in generous supply. With the intense amount of physical exertion, foods that would "stick to your ribs" were considered a necessity.

People were very frugal in those days. The depression years of the early 30s and a severe drought made times hard for many people. But farm folks were used to raising most of their food and learned to be self-sufficient.

When I was a child, my parents went to the store only occasionally, to buy

just the basic necessities such as sugar, flour, dried beans, crackers, and maybe coffee and cocoa powder. Because of the large family, they would buy 100 pounds of all-purpose flour and 100 pounds of bread flour and a large sack of sugar. We stored the flour and sugar in large metal cans. We usually baked at least eight loaves of bread at a time. Yeast for the bread was made from a starter passed down from generation to generation. We always cooked potatoes, mashed them and added them to the starter, along with sugar, flour, and salt, to increase the quantity. After the starter would rise properly we would make up the bread dough, saving a portion of the new yeast mixture to use the next time we baked bread. If your starter or a neighbor's yeast happened to go bad, you shared a start with each other to keep the process going.

I also remember the war years when things like sugar and gasoline were rationed. Rationing changed our lifestyles. In recipes for cakes, cookies, and the like, we learned to substitute corn syrup, honey, or molasses for sugar, adjusting the amount of flour and liquid to compensate. Saccharin was used in beverages. Farm folks always seemed to have an extra special knack of improvising when necessary—or just doing without!

At my parents' home, we grew our own cane to make molasses. We harvested the cane in the fall of the year and took it to the molasses mill near Dayton, Virginia, where it was processed into thick old-fashioned molasses.

Gardening was as important for food for the family as the farm crops were

for the animals. We always had a large garden plus a truck patch for growing large quantities of potatoes and corn. We always planted corn beans in the corn. There is nothing quite like the old-fashioned corn beans. My husband's mother gave me seed for a good variety, which I save each year. We saved seed from many of our vegetables so we didn't need to buy seed. The hybrid seeds of today will not reproduce properly, so saving them is not useful. Here is a little tip: if you don't use a whole package of seed, it can be kept in the freezer indefinitely.

If you don't have a garden, a few tomato plants, peppers, herbs, and the like, can be planted in flower beds around the house. Some folks plant them in large patio planters. The new bush varieties of squash, cucumbers, and tomatoes are great for this. I tell people that my garden is my wellness center. I get lots of exercise and have good healthy food to show for it as well! Exercise is certainly one of the important keys to good health, along with healthy food.

When I think back to the hundreds of jars of food my mother used to can for the winter, I'm sure young cooks of today would think it was enough to open a country store! She had a large copper boiler that held about fourteen quart jars at one time. It was oval-shaped and fit over two burners on the gas stove. When peaches were ripened just right, my parents would go to a relative's orchard early in the morning and come back with at least seven bushels of peaches. They would call my grandparents to come to help peel peaches. Of course, we children all pitched in, some washing cans or peaches, others packing them in the cans and making the sugar syrup. Only the older children were allowed to help peel the peaches, because it was of utmost importance to be able to peel razor thin so you would not waste any of the peach. By evening we would have more than

100 quarts of peaches. In addition to canning, we also dried fruit, such as apple slices, to preserve them for the winter.

When we had several bushels of green beans to can at one time, or at butchering time when there was a lot of meat to can, we would make a fire under the big iron kettle in the wash-house. My father made a wooden rack to fit in the rounded bottom of the kettle to set the jars on. This rack held about twenty-five quart jars at one time. We kept the water boiling for three or four hours, depending on what we were canning.

We would also make sauerkraut in large ten-gallon stone crocks, letting it ferment to just the right stage before canning it. Sauerkraut and dumplings with small sausage balls was an old-time favorite. When I made it for my family, my daughters preferred hot-dog rings for the meat instead of the sausage.

Meat was always an important part of most meals on the farm. Even breakfast usually included meat—bacon, ham, or pudding meat and ponhoss. An old-time breakfast favorite was hominy and puddings. We also ate pancakes with pudding or with sausage gravy. The ponhoss was sliced and fried in a skillet and served with homemade molasses, or with apple butter, which we also made in our big iron kettles each year. We cooked cornmeal mush to eat warm with milk. Whatever was left over, we sliced like the ponhoss, fried it in a skillet and served it for supper with apple butter or molasses. Homemade bread, still warm out of the oven, spread generously with butter and apple butter, was a favorite after-school treat. And, of course, we churned the butter using cream from our dairy.

Each year my parents butchered a beef or two, five or six hogs, a sheep, numerous chickens, and some turkeys. In the winter they always

purchased a keg of salt fish to be fried for breakfast. The small fish were preserved in salt brine. Then we would clean them, remove the scales, and soak them overnight in vinegar water to remove the salt taste. This was a little like the country hams we cured with our own sugar-cure mixture, with the basic ingredient of salt. The hams were hung in the meat house to "cure out," and when we needed one, we trimmed the rind off and soaked it overnight to help remove some of the salt before cooking it.

We also kept a flock of chickens to provide fresh eggs, as well as meat. If we wanted to roast a hen or two for a meal or for making chicken noodle soup, we went to the chicken house, caught several chickens to butcher. The directions for butchering poultry are given in my cookbook beginning on page 349. This information is still relevant for today!

Meat was considered very important, because it would "stick to your ribs" until the next meal. Meat, and even the fat on the meat, was considered necessary for the strenuous fieldwork and the cold weather. I remember my father making a remark about needing some grease inside you to keep things running smoothly. He was so accustomed to faithfully greasing the farm equipment, so it would run properly, that he was convinced it was the same with the human body! My parents also believed it was sinful to waste food, and that included the fat on the meat. So we were required to eat the fat whether we liked it or not!

I talked to my husband's ninety-three-year-old Aunt Grace this week about how it used to be when she was growing up. She said that it seemed to take more fat in those days because of being out in the cold so much. Bedrooms were usually not heated in the wintertime. Children walked long distances to school in

the cold and snow. There does seem to be some scientific evidence to support the perception that they needed more fat in their diets to contend with these conditions. Aunt Grace said there wasn't much heat in the homes, and no buttons to push. She also told me her mother-in-law made such good bread dressing. Then she found out that Grandma rendered the fat they obtained from chickens they butchered and used some of that in her dressing. Many farmwomen used the chicken fat—rendered into a solid fat similar to rich lard—in things like biscuits. There were no flakier biscuits around than those made with chicken fat!

Aunt Grace's Aunt Emma made the best dressing balls in the Shenandoah Valley. Aunt Grace asked for the secret, not wanting the recipe to go with Aunt Emma to her grave. But she was not prepared for the answer. Aunt Emma said after she roasted a turkey or chicken, she would skin it, grind up the skin in a food grinder, and use the product in the dressing balls! The little particles of rich fat throughout made the balls so tender they melted in your mouth. After the secret was out, Aunt Emma's dressing balls didn't taste quite so good! Back then we had no idea what cholesterol was, and sometimes I almost wish we still didn't know!

In my own experience, we rendered any fat or tallow from meat and accumulated it. We used rendered fat, ham rinds or skins, and any lard that was too old to use in cooking, to make soap. We made the soap in our big iron kettle in the washhouse. (You will also find the recipe for homemade soap in my cookbook.) Even the underlie that separated from the soap in a layer in the bottom of the kettle as it cooled, was used with hot water to scrub the porch, the washhouse floor, and cement walks. It was a powerful cleaner for greasy surfaces, such as the washhouse floor after butchering day. *Nothing* was

wasted!

I am thankful that our parents were concerned about the starving people in the world. They taught us to be thrifty and economical so we could help meet the needs of others. Not liking a food was no excuse for wasting it. My parents didn't have much tolerance for our likes and dislikes. If we didn't care for something, they thought we were just being "snousy" or persnickety! We were required to eat small amounts of food we didn't like, and almost always learned to enjoy that food eventually. The old-time proverb, "Waste not, want not" was, not only a good survival technique, but also gave us a sense of being good stewards. There was an old Amish proverb that was similar: "Eat it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without."

Leftovers should be preserved in the refrigerator instead of leaving them at room temperature or dumping them out. I still remember the old icebox we used on the farm. This old icebox consisted of two galvanized chests—a smaller box inside a larger box, with a layer of sawdust packed between them. A drain spout at the bottom drained the melted ice. My father would go to the Cassco Ice substation in Bridgewater to get a huge 300-pound block of ice, which he placed in the bottom of the icebox. If we wanted to make ice cream, we raided the icebox! Some farmers had their own icehouses, where big blocks of ice, cut from the frozen river in the wintertime, were stored for use during the summer months.

I am reminded of the food traditions among the Amish. A meal for guests was not complete without seven sweets and seven sours. This meant they would have at least seven dishes in the meat/potato/vegetable category—or in-between dishes such as salad eggs, vegetable salads, coleslaw, or hot slaw, applesauce, soda cheese or homemade cottage

cheese. The seven sweets consisted of fruit salads, melons, custards, puddings, cakes, pies, homemade ice cream and candies.

My mother's entertaining was very generous, but not quite to that extreme. To feed our large family, we always baked on Saturday—several pies, a couple of cakes, custards, and fruit desserts. We often we had Sunday dinner guests, and you would be surprised how fast the food disappeared! When we baked bread, we often made big batches of cinnamon rolls, or sticky buns, or large numbers of doughnuts. We even made our own potato chips in the big iron kettle, deep fried in lard obtained from the hogs we had butchered. Lard was our basic shortening and made the flakiest piecrusts around. Would you believe, with this kind of food, my great-grandmother lived to be ninety-eight years old! They reported that she always used plenty of butter and cream, cheese, and nuts—all the things that make food extra special.

So, with all the changes in foods and food preparation, lifestyles, and demands on time, is it any wonder that many young people of today decide they do not like cooking? And here is where my cookbook came into being.

I did not intend to prepare a cookbook for publication when I started with the project. I was only doing something for my three daughters. We lived on a dairy farm and had no sons, so the girls helped with the milkings on the weekends. They had helped in the kitchen as youngsters; but soon other things crowded out time in the kitchen. I thought I would give them extra training in their later teen years. I did not want them to leave home without being accomplished in cooking and baking—making things from scratch, as all farm girls should. That would have been considered a terrible disgrace! But with school, music, and many other

activities, plus some farm chores, there was no time for cooking. So, I decided to write things down for them, reorganizing my recipe collection as well. Often I made things without a recipe, just adding ingredients until it looked right, but they wanted precise amounts. They couldn't decide when it "looked right." I included tips and other helpful information not included in most cookbook, which are basically recipe collections rather than how-to books. I also wanted to teach them to can and freeze foods.

To make a long story short, other friends and church family began

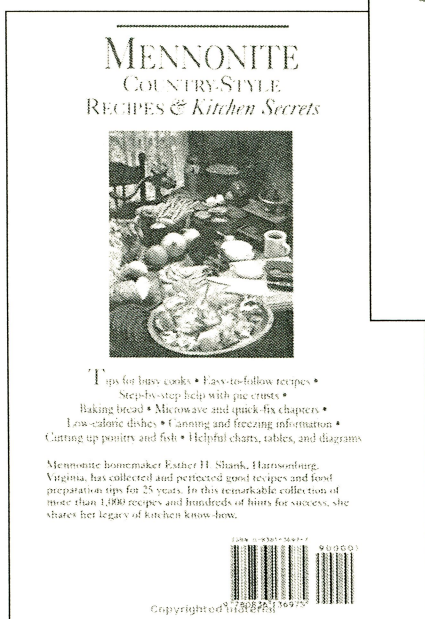
compliments I have received since the book was published have confirmed my observations.

I taught a cooking and homemaking class in the Continuing Education Department at Eastern Mennonite University from 1992 to 1996, until

give additional information, along with the recipes. Our older Mennonite cookbooks did not include canning and freezing information, because everyone knew by experience just how to do it. And in my mother's generation the recipes didn't even include amounts of many of the ingredients. Recipes in her generation called for flour enough to make a stiff dough, or butter the size of an egg, a pinch of this or a pinch of that. They didn't even give pan sizes, baking times or temperatures. Everyone just knew those things.

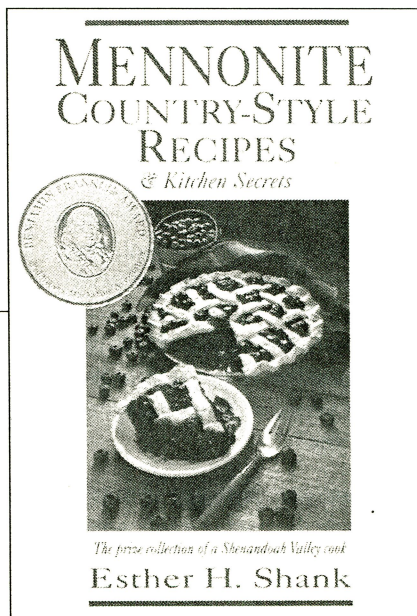
I've received some interesting calls from young cooks. Here are some of them. "What is baking soda? Is it club soda or something else?" "What is wrong? I've cooked this corn on the cob for three hours and it's still tough!" "I just ruined my rocky road candy. I don't want to waste all those good ingredients, so what can I do to salvage it?" Someone else received a call saying, "I won't be able to double the recipe as was directed, because my stove does not heat up to 850 degrees!"

We are becoming adept in technology. But it seems the basic knowledge for everyday living is so lacking that many times people don't know how to cope. I wonder sometimes what would happen if suddenly all our technology was eradicated and we had no buttons to push. If we had to go back to the simple ways of yesterday and do everything from scratch, what would become of this generation? Would persons have a clue how to manage? When I was preparing the text for my book, I called various companies to verify information. One company told me that they had explicit directions on their soup cans: open the can, empty the contents into a saucepan, place on the burner and heat. They decided this was too obvious and unnecessary and may even insult a person's intelligence. But after omitting the directions, their hotline was flooded with calls asking



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asking if I would make copies of my collection for them, too. Some of our daughters' friends were calling me for cooking information, because their mothers were away at work. So I began to see the need to help young people who were leaving the farm with very little experience in the kitchen. It seemed that cooking skills had disappeared with the family farms. Many new brides were overwhelmed with the thought of taking on the responsibilities of meal preparation and homemaking. The many



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the department was phased out. It was enlightening to see, not only the eagerness of students to learn, but also the lack of basic knowledge in these areas. These were college students who had learned almost everything except how to be efficient in the basic skills of daily living!

You wouldn't believe the calls I receive from young people asking for help with their cooking, since my cookbook has been published. With today's women away from home much more, many are not learning homemaking skills. The more you practice, of course, the more skillful you become. When you do things only occasionally, it's easy to forget how to do them.

That was the focus of my book, to


for help on how to prepare the soup! So they decided to put the directions back on the cans!

My, haven't times changed! What will the next generation be doing? Will the pendulum swing the other way? Will they want to go back to the land and to the "good old days"?

There are lots of other things I would like to have elaborated on. Many farms had all their own fruit trees; there were cherries, apples, and pears to harvest. Harvest times were almost always social events as well. Just imagine the good times and socializing that went on as groups of people shelled bushels of peas, seeded cherries, prepared apples for apple butter or cracked walnuts and picked out the nut meats.

And, by the way, we had all those old-time remedies for your physical ailments as well, such as mustard plasters or poultices (for wounds) out of mustard leaves or dry mustard. There were certain teas that relieved all kinds of ailments. There is a recipe in my cookbook for an excellent gargle for sore throat. (In those days, you didn't think of going to the doctor unless you thought maybe someone might die if you didn't!) And as I said before, the physical activity was valuable. As teenagers, we got up before 5:00 a.m. and milked fifty cows before we went to school. Then we hurried home in the evening and did it again. By the time we did our schoolwork, we needed to get to bed so we could get up early the next morning and do it all over again. There was no time to get into much mischief. Today, that may be considered child abuse! But, believe me, we learned to work and to manage a household well! And I think we appreciated what we had more than most youngsters do today. Now, it seems so many persons just expect things to be handed out to them, and do not think of ways that they could be a blessing to others.

I think I have run out of shortening, so I must close! We've journeyed from the history of our forefathers up to more recent history. It's hard to comprehend how much things really have changed! My father-in-law lived to be ninety years of age. Can you imagine the changes in his lifetime, and the adjustments he had to make in a ninety-year span? We have so much to be thankful for with all our modern conveniences. But the strange thing is that it seems the more buttons there are to push, the busier one becomes, and the less time there is for family and friends. On the other hand, when people talk about the "good old days," I'm not sure they realize how much hard work there was. I haven't found any older persons whom I've asked whether they would like to go back to their younger years, who have responded with a "yes."

So I guess our challenge is to try to hang on to the best of each generation, to be very thankful for the blessings we have, and to be good stewards of these blessings and opportunities so we can pass a good heritage on to the next generation! Thank you, and may God bless each of you! 

—*Esther Shank, Harrisonburg, Virginia is the author of Mennonite Country-Style Recipes and Kitchen Secrets (Herald Press, 1987). This article is based on a speech Shank gave at a workshop for teachers of domestic skills classes at the Frontier Culture Museum, Staunton, Virginia.*

Mennonite Mirth: Food That Makes Me Smile

by Jep Hostetler

From the mailbox:

This writer's most recent offering presented in the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* included a list of "you know you are an aging Mennonite when ..." On the list was a comment about remembering the holy kiss (which of course, is no longer practiced by mainstream Mennonites). An interesting reply came from a writer in Michigan who states:

"I read with interest your article in the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*. I remember when my parents were entertaining and housing some Mennonite leaders in our home when I was quite young. I would love to listen in on their conversations. One time they were discussing the holy kiss. Evidently C. F. Derstine, a popular Ontario evangelist, did not like to be kissed on the mouth with the holy kiss. It seemed to be common knowledge among the ministers that at the last second C.F. would lift his head and the kissing brother would hit his chin. According to my recollection, this became a game for the other ministers who would try and beat him to the draw and kiss him on the lips. I remember that at the time I wondered...Holy? Kiss?"

Fun food. Food that makes one smile!

One of the questions I ask people when we look at their humor background is this: "Were mealtimes fun

times at your house?" It is interesting to see the variety of answers to these questions, particularly among Mennonite families. Some families used "suppertime" as a time to review the day and discipline the children. Others found the supper hour to be a time of celebration, light-heartedness and fun. However, beyond meals, it occurred to me that various households had a short or long list of fun foods.

Here are some of the fun foods from my childhood and how I viewed them.

1. Ice cream, but not just any old ice cream, but two special kinds of ice cream.

- **Homemade.** The first kind of ice cream was homemade, hand-cranked, everybody-helped-turn-the-crank-is-it-ready-yet type of ice cream, with about thirty percent cream. This was fun food because it always signified a get-together with friends or relatives and lots of food. Later, when we boys learned more about mechanics, we figured out a way to hook up the ice cream churn to a tractor power take-off. So much for the everybody-help idea. The point is, it was fun food! Just thinking about it makes me smile.

- **Boxed ice cream.** Smith Dairy in Orrville, Ohio sold the second kind of ice cream. On the way to my grandmother Lehman's house from Burton City, North Lawrence or Dalton, (depending upon where we were living at the time), we would stop at the Smith Dairy outlet on Market Street and pick up several pints of ice cream. This ice cream came in wax-covered cardboard containers. Then, when we arrived at Grandmother Christina's house, Dad would carefully perform the ritual of

taking out his pocketknife, opening the blade, and cutting each pint of ice cream in half. The open face of ice cream became the top. Each of us children would get a half-pint of ice cream, a flat, small wooden spoon with which to eat it and a place to sit. The celebration would begin. Good memories, good ice cream.

2. Popcorn.

- **Freshly popped.** We lived on the farm and rarely came in contact with the processed junk food such as potato chips, snacking crackers, or pretzels. That came much later. However, almost like clockwork on Sunday evenings, Mother would get out the big skillet and would pop corn on top of the stove. With seven children, a few foster children and often a guest or

two, it seemed as though mother could barely keep ahead of the foraging youngsters. Oh, yes, it was popped in butter and heavily salted. It was truly fun food, even if it was not health food. The memories of the smells and salty, buttery taste make me smile.

- **Popcorn balls.** These were the pull-your-loose-tooth-right-out-of-your-head type popcorn balls. They were reserved for Christmastime and were made by a single lady who lived down the road. Popcorn balls were her specialty. You could always count on getting a navel orange and one of Lydia's popcorn balls at church some Sunday evening during December. We loved it. Each of us had his or her own softball-sized popcorn ball and we did not have to share it with anyone, not even Shep or Fezer, the hungry dogs that scampered to get a bite. Fun food. I remember.

3. Taffy.

- Perhaps it was the social setting that made this "food" a fun food. It was always related to a gathering of

young people and buttery hands. The way it worked was quite simple. Someone knew the recipe for taffy and would cook the batch in a large pan. At just the right time the taffy batch was poured out onto waxed paper. As the hot, syrupy, sticky goo began to cool, each person would get a big handful. Sometimes it was almost too hot and there were some minor burns. But usually it was a matter of stretching the taffy back and forth, allowing air to get into the mix and turning the clear batch into frosty taffy. Some young people would stretch the taffy back and forth between their hands, in pairs, making long, sagging strips and then reuniting the gooey mass to stretch it again. Ouch, too hot! Ah, just right. As the taffy ropes were rolled out onto waxed paper, they were cut into bite-sized pieces, allowed to cool, and distributed among all who helped in the festivities. Fun food, er, candy.

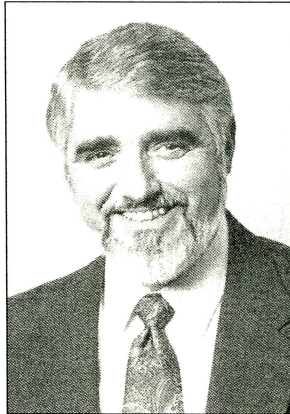
4. Lima beans.

- All right, so I may be alone on this one. Baby lima beans are delicious – at least the way Mother made them. She always made a white sauce, or at least a butter-type sauce, and the little lima beans were cooked just right. Ymmmm! It meant that the summer harvest was going on in full swing, with peaches soon, and sweet corn, and the bustle of canning. Maybe it was the fact that I was the only one in my family that really liked lima beans. Maybe it was just that Mother always asked me if I wanted her to cook up some lima beans. Maybe it is all a myth and none of this ever happened. Wherever the truth lies, I liked lima beans the first time I tasted them and they make me smile.


5. Oyster soup.

- My father was a barber all his life. He would often barber on Friday evenings and then again all day Saturday, late into the evening. It was a way to keep the family budget from sagging too far.

(continued on page 16)



(continued from page 15)

On rare occasions – I guess it would be about once a year – Dad would bring home a can of oysters and announce that tomorrow, Sunday, we were going to have oyster soup. (Actually, Dad was a friend of our local grocer, Mr. Berg, who would tell Dad when a fresh shipment of oysters had arrived.) It is no longer clear to me whether my father actually made the soup or mother produced the savory slurry, but we looked forward to the taste of this special treat. Not only was the soup special, but also it was the only time Mom would buy oyster crackers. I never was certain why one could not use saltine-type crackers for this occasion, but oyster crackers were the order of the day. Oyster soup, special soup, hot soup, and memories. It makes me smile. 

—Jep Hostetler, Ph.D., Columbus, Ohio, is a humor consultant and author. He is an associate professor emeritus at the Ohio State University College of Medicine. He and his wife Joyce serve as staff persons for the Mennonite Medical Association.

The Back Page

Harder, Toews and Yoder win first place honors in the 2001 John Horsch Mennonite History Essay. They are among the eight students in three academic levels who submitted papers on various topics in Anabaptist/Mennonite studies.


Wilmer T. Harder, AMBS, Elkhart, Indiana, won first place in Class I (Seminary and Graduate School) for his paper, *Theology for Mennonites and Christendom: A Comparison of John C. Wenger and Edmund G. Kaufman*. In second place is Elizabeth Raid, Earlham School of Religion, Richmond, Indiana, *The Work of the World and the Work of the Church: Mixing Money, Management, and Faith*.

In Class II (Undergraduate College and University) the first place winner is Nathan W. Toews, Bethel College,

North Newton, Kansas, *The Rise and Fall of the Woodlawn Mennonite*

Church. Second place was awarded to Joseph Sawatzky, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas, for his essay, *Evangelical and Mennonite: The Sermons and Influences of Victor Sawatzky*. The third place was not awarded.

Paul Yoder, EMHS, Harrisonburg, Virginia, won first place in Class III (High School) for his paper, *Brother John R. Mumaw*. Second place winner is Joel Gaeddert, Shawnee Mission East High School, Prairie Village, Kansas, *Civilian Public Service: An Acceptable Compromise*.

In third place is Angie Lederach, EMHS, Harrisonburg, Virginia, for her essay, *George R. Brunk I: A man of insight and power*. 

—jes



The annual contest is named in honor of John Horsch (1867-1941), the German-American Mennonite historian and polemicist who did much to reawaken interest in Anabaptist and Mennonite studies in the 20th century.

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Mennonite Historical Bulletin

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The Role and Impact of the Conscience in Anabaptism

by Anne Yoder

This is the text of a sermon given at West Philadelphia Mennonite Fellowship, October 14, 2001.

"May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer (Psalm 19:14). Amen."

I was thinking of entitling my sermon today "Never enthuse about anything to your pastor because you may end up preaching a sermon about it." But actually, I am glad to be here with you in this capacity to share some thoughts and hopes about our history and future as an Anabaptist people.

Does anyone know who the first conscientious objector was in the Bible? The first ones that came to mind are Daniel and his friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who were Jews who would not bow down to the ruling king's image. Instead they let themselves be thrown into fire and into a den of man-eating lions rather than forsake Yahweh. In their cases, God's deliverance of them was earthly and spectacular.

Another story of conscientious objectors is in the Book of the Maccabees from the *Apocrypha*, where seven brothers, along with their mother, were arrested. The king at the time had earlier decreed that the Jews



"We cannot yield, we cannot compromise, we must suffer.... I pray God for strength to remain faithful." World War I Conscientious Objectors, Camp Pike, Little Rock, Arkansas. (Credit: Milton Brenneman Photograph Collection, Mennonite Church USA Archives—Goshen, Ind.)

must abandon their ancestral customs and no longer live by the laws of God, and that they were to dedicate the Temple in Jerusalem to Zeus. An order went out that those who would not voluntarily conform to Greek customs were to be executed. I was going to have this whole story read today, but the details of the torture and executions are quite gruesome, and there was no miraculous intervention on their behalf this time. Still, their story is worth relating. As each brother was tortured and killed at the orders of the king, Antiochus, they bore witness to their faith in God who was winning the ultimate victory. The fourth son, when he neared his end cried out, "Ours is the better choice, to meet death at men's

hands, yet relying on God's promise that we shall be raised up by him; whereas for you there can be no resurrection, no new life." When it was the youngest one's turn to die, Antiochus "appealed to him not with mere words, but with promises on oath to make him both rich and happy if he would abandon the traditions of his ancestors; he would make him his Friend and entrust him with public office. But the young man said, 'What are you waiting for? I will not comply with the King's ordinance; I obey the ordinance of the Law given to our ancestors by Moses.... Our brothers already, after enduring brief pain, now drink of ever-flowing life, by virtue of God's covenant.' The king fell into a rage at

this and treated the young man more cruelly than the others, for he was smarting at the young man's scorn. And so the last brother met his end undefiled and with perfect trust in the Lord. The mother was the last to die, after her sons."

Now let us swing forward in history a few thousand years to the birth of Anabaptism in Europe in the 1500s. When I read the story of the seven brothers, I thought it could just as easily have appeared in the *Martyrs' Mirror*, where so many similar stories of Anabaptist faith in the face of persecution have been preserved. In the 16th century, God's Spirit was moving in such a way that this believers' movement could not be stomped out no matter what evils were devised against them – banishment; confiscation of their homes and livelihoods; months and even years in cold, dank,

infested dungeons; being torn away from loved ones; subject to endless questioning and attempts to make them change their minds; torture; and finally for many, execution.

follow Christ in all things. They took the Scriptures as their guide, shared their faith, baptized upon confession of faith, and gave to those in need. As the Jewish brothers had done, they too were conscientiously objecting to

the status quo, and refusing to be swayed by the authorities. By not baptizing their children in the state church they were upsetting the control of those who used the church rolls to keep track of the populace and levy taxes on them. By not relying on priests or the Pope, they were interpreting the Scriptures themselves and thus could see the injustices and mishandled truths of the established church. By insisting on the separation of church and state and refusing to bear arms to help their

country dominate other countries, they were re-introducing nonviolence as a way of life.

Let us swing forward in history again



"Returning good for evil will still have its effect upon a nation and church if only put into practice." *World War I Conscientious Objectors, Camp Lewis, Washington, 1918. Back row with hats and dark coats: Homer Schlegel, John Kripf, Orie M. Conrad, Elmer McTimmonds. Front row: Chris Hostetter, Elmer Schutz, Jess Emmert, _____ Holdeman (?) and unknown.* (Credit: Orie M. Conrad Collection, Mennonite Church USA Archives—Goshen, Ind.)

These Anabaptists had a passion for God that did not fit into the confines of the state-sponsored church of the time. They wanted the freedom to live as the early church had lived, to

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to the early years of the 20th century. America had become by this time the home of many people of Anabaptist descent, coming from Germany, the Netherlands, and other European countries, and in most recent years, a large influx from Russia – Mennonites who had been given the choice of either serving in the Russian military or exile. For these people especially, America represented a land of freedom, where one had the choice to not bear arms, and to make this choice without reprisals. This myth was exploded when the United States joined the fight against Germany in World War I and instituted a draft. Suddenly young men had to decide how to respond to the war. Approximately 4,000 men in the United States declared themselves to be conscientious objectors to war. At this time, the War Department had made no provisions for COs – as though they had never expected anyone to object to fighting the Kaiser. After all, in their minds of many, this was a holy war, blessed by God, a “War to End All Wars.” To their shock and disgust, thousands of men disagreed with them.

The COs were sent to the army camps like all the other draftees. There they had to convince everyone that they were sincere in their convictions. The first COs especially were subjected to much heckling and to endless questioning. Some men were worn down by it all, and agreed to put on the military uniform, or to accept noncombatant roles in the army, though some were deferred for farm labor or to reconstruction work with the American Friends Service Committee. But for some COs, the uniform and noncombatant service were unacceptable, and no amount of persuasion could make them change their minds. They were not given the option

of deferment.

In the Swarthmore College Peace Collection, I have files on several hundred COs from World War I, and have found their stories fascinating. We often hear in our country about the men who died in wars in order to ensure our freedoms. I’d like to share with you a few stories of men who were willing to suffer and even die rather than forsake their conscientious belief in the sacredness of life. I should make it clear that, opposed to what I heard as a child, not all COs were Mennonites, or even religious. Many absolutist COs were Socialists who had thought deeply about society and the value of human life. Some simply believed that war was a stupid way to resolve conflicts and that this war was being run by capitalists for their own benefit. Many COs were from religious faiths, such as Russian

Molokhans, Christadelphians, Quakers, and Jehovah’s Witnesses. Many more were faith descendents of Anabaptists.

The letters and reports written by these COs sometimes spoke of good treatment by their officers and the enlisted men, but just as often they told stories of abuse. George Miller, a Mennonite, refused to wear the military uniform and to drill in the army camp. One day he was given an order by a commanding officer, but he replied that he could not conscientiously obey it. At this, the corporal hit him in the face and broke his nose. The next night, after Miller was in bed, a mob descended on him and took him and four other COs to the shower room where they were deluged with freezing cold water. They said these showers would not end until the COs promised to put on the

uniform. Miller’s nightclothes were torn off of him and he was scrubbed with scrubbing brushes and hit with brooms. When he still refused, they held him upside down in a full tub of water. Then they took him to his bed and threw him down on the springs, having taken all his bedding and clothes away. It took three months for Miller to heal of this abuse. Later he wrote: “I am going through life with a physical defect which was caused by mistreatment in camp, but I am happy I was taught to uphold the principle of nonresistance as Christ taught and lived, and those of our heroes of faith who have gone before. Returning good for evil will still have its effect upon a nation and church if only put into practice.”

Out of all the COs in WWI, 450 went to prison. The official procedure for COs who



“... it was impossible for me to perform the work [as ordered].” Chris Graber and Fred Swartzendruber, World War I Conscientious Objectors, Camp Fort Riley, Kansas, 1919. (Credit: C. L. and Mina Roth Graber Collection, Mennonite Church USA Archives—Goshen, Ind.)



"I hope that we can state emphatically that we conscientiously object to war with every fiber of our beings." Chris Graber driving the camp's mule team, 1919. (Credit: C. L. and Mina Roth Graber Collection, Mennonite Church USA Archives—Goshen, Ind.)

refused to obey military orders was to have them appear for courts-martial hearings. Some of the hearings were short and to the point – the point being that the COs were going to be sentenced to prison no matter what, so there was no reason to waste time questioning them. But at other military camps, the hearings went on and on, with the same outcome, of course. One hearing record went on for over forty typewritten pages!

In these longer trials, military personnel testified to the circumstances of the disobeyed order, the prosecutor would talk, the defense lawyer would talk, and then finally the CO would be questioned. Questions ranged from where the man grew up, whether he was married or not, his age, his church background, whether he'd become a member of an established peace church and had done so in order to get CO status easier, whether his siblings were Christians, whether he and his family read German newspapers, whether they wanted the Kaiser or the U.S. to win the war, whether if someone tried to rape their sisters they would intervene, whether they thought it was right to let the Germans continue to rape young Belgian girls and massacre villages

(which was the current war cry), whether accepting a farm furlough instead of a prison sentence was a good Christian response, and on and on. A great deal of time went into establishing whether or not the CO was "sincere" which would supposedly mean a better sentence or deferment, though this never happened. It was especially impossible because of Lieutenant Woods, a psychologist hired, I think, by the United States government, who had interviewed some of the COs and used their answers as evidence in courts-martial hearings that they were insincere malingerers, cowards, mentally deficient, hypocrites, and showed a pathological heredity.

Some COs, especially the Socialists who had discussed the war and their response to it in detail, were able to defend themselves and answer the questions put to them with a great deal of aplomb. But many of these COs had had only a grade school education; most were farmers or laborers. Yet I was moved, often to tears, by their testimonies in the face of trial, remaining doggedly true to their convictions in spite of ridicule and even hatred. They were living out the verse in Luke 12:12: "when the

time comes, the Holy Spirit will teach you what you must say" and Hebrews 12:3: "Think of the way Jesus stood such opposition from sinners and then you will not give up from want of courage."

During his trial, Jacob Martins stated: "Confessing myself to be a follower of Christ and therefore conscientiously opposed to being connected with the military organization and its life, happiness and property destroying process in any way, and at the same time being a member of the Mennonite Brethren Church, a religious sect that is opposed to war and forbids its members to participate in war in any form ... it was impossible for me to perform the work [as ordered]. Christ expects his followers to put into practice all of his doctrines, not only those that are easy to perform but also the ones that are trying and difficult, such as the doctrine of non-resistance."

Maurice Hess, a Dunkard, told his judges: "I do not believe that I am seeking martyrdom. As a young man, life and its hopes and freedom and opportunities for service are sweet to me. I want to go out into the world and make use of what little talent I may have acquired by long and laborious study. But I know that I dare not purchase these things at the price of eternal condemnation. I know the teaching of Christ, my Savior. He taught us to resist not evil, to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and do good to them that hate us. Not only did he teach this, but he also practiced it in Gethsemane, before Pilate, and on Calvary. We would indeed be hypocrites and base traitors to our profession if we would be unwilling to bear the taunts and jeers of a sinful world, and its imprisonment, and torture or death, rather than to participate in war and military service. We know that obedience to Christ will gain for us the glorious prize of eternal life. We cannot yield,

we cannot compromise, we must suffer ... I pray God for strength to remain faithful.”

The COs who went through courts-martial hearings were all condemned to prison. The sentences ranged from two to twenty-five years, most being at the higher end. And this was for refusing to rake a pathway or drill with the soldiers or equally petty things – but, of course, they represented an entire refusal to allow the state to dictate over and above what their consciences would allow. Many of these men spent months, and even years in prison, before a general amnesty was allowed.

One of the best-known stories of WWI COs is of five Hutterites – four brothers named Hofer and Jacob Wipf. They had been sent to Alcatraz prison after their courts-martial, where they again refused to don the military uniform. The authorities put them in solitary confinement cells in the dungeon, which were dank, cold, dark, dirty and infested. The men were locked up wearing nothing but light underwear, and were given no blankets or beds. They had only the cement floor for a bed. They were given nothing to eat for the first four and a half days, and were given only half a glass of water every 24 hours. The last one and a half days they were forced to stand with their hands tied together crosswise above their heads so high that they could barely touch the floor with their feet. When they were finally released from solitary confinement, they were covered with a rash, badly bitten by insects, and their arms were so swollen they could not put their jackets on. They also had bruises from being beaten with clubs. Soon after they were again sent to their cells day and night, though not with their hands tied up. After four months, they were transferred to Fort Leavenworth. Upon their arrival, they were made to take off their clothes in order to put

on prison uniforms, except that it took two hours for the uniforms to arrive, and the men had to wait outside in the freezing cold. Joseph and Michael Hofer became so ill that they had to be taken to the hospital, where they both later died. Jacob Wipf and David Hofer were put into solitary confinement cells because again they refused to do work assigned by the military. Their hands were stretched out through the iron bars of their cells and the wrists chained together. They were made to stand that way for nine hours a day, getting only bread and water. This lasted for two weeks.

Soon after his brothers died, David Hofer was suddenly released from prison, to his joy. The story of their treatment had been smuggled out of the prison by other COs, and had made national news. On December 16, 1918, the Secretary of War issued an order prohibiting the handcuffing and chaining of military prisoners, as well as other brutal punishments (so that not only were CO prisoners better treated thereafter, but also all federal prisoners). This was finally put into effect at Fort Leavenworth, and Jacob Wipf was released from his chains. He sent a message to his family that read in part: “Sometimes I envy the three who have already been released from this torment. Then I think, why is the hand of the Lord so heavy upon me? I have always tried to be faithful and hard-working and have hardly ever made trouble for the Brotherhood. Why must I go on suffering all alone? But then there is joy too, so that I could weep for joy when I think that the Lord considers me worthy to suffer for His sake. And I must confess that my life here, compared with our previous experiences [at Alcatraz], is like living in a palace.” He was finally released from prison on April 13, 1919.

I think these experiences have real relevance for us today, not just in terms of how we should respond to

war, but also in terms of really thinking hard about what our consciences will and will not allow us to do. Sometimes I think that all Christians are conscientiously opposed to obeying the speed limit – at least I see a great many cars with Jesus symbols on them whizzing around on the roads. We need to think about what kind of witness our objections give, and we need to do something positive whenever possible to reflect the fact that we are creators and not destroyers. What are we conscientiously in favor of? But when we do conscientiously object to something, we must be respectful and peaceful, even though our determination is so strong that we will suffer anything rather than give in.

I cannot make you all into conscientious objectors to war. But I do want to make clear that I believe that non-resistance is what we are called to as followers of Christ. I believe that our witness for peace is vital. Our country has declared that we are at war. As individuals and as a church body I hope that we can state emphatically that we conscientiously object to war with every fiber of our beings. I hope we will say that war breeds hatred and violence, not justice and peace. And I hope that we, like the COs who have gone before us, will risk anything rather than kill others to save ourselves.

Let me just mention that the War Department has recently declared that it does not plan to institute another draft. And we may be thinking, I’m not of draft age anyway. That may be, but it does not leave us off the hook. We still need to speak out and work for peace as part of our discipleship. One outcome of this is that our young people, if they ever are drafted, will have a grounding for developing conscientious objection to war and it will give them a recognizable peace background when they try

Continued on page 15

The Snyder Community at Plainview, Texas

by James A. Snyder

The Snyder Community was a short-lived, planned, rural settlement located five miles south and one mile west of Plainview, Texas. Peter B. Snyder, from Alpha, Minnesota, but born in Illinois, was its primary promoter. Snyder was a Mennonite minister and farmer, who had been searching for low-priced farmland to meet the demand created by expanding Mennonite farming communities across the Midwest. Low prices in Texas, promoted by the advertisements of land agents caught Peter's attention.

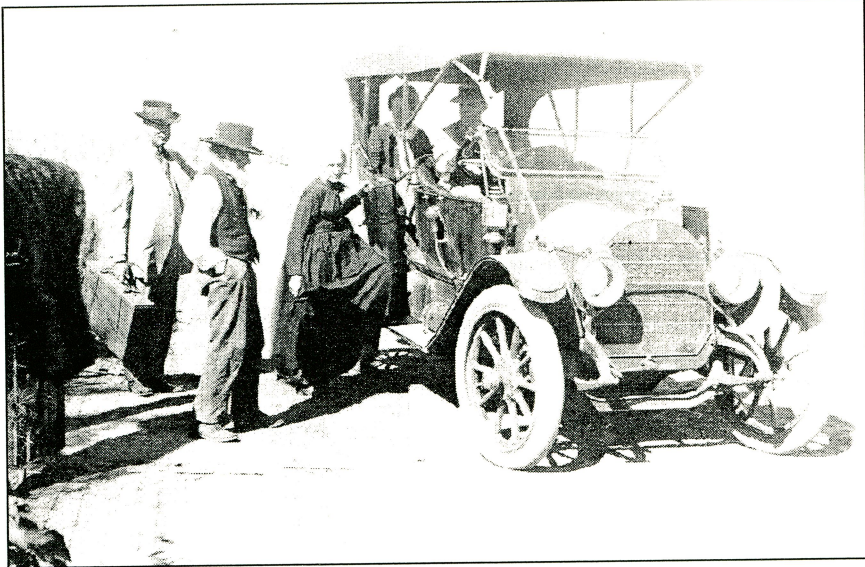
On February 5, 1907, Peter and Ida, their eight children, and Peter's parents, John R. and Elizabeth, left Alpha on the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway bound for Plainview, Texas. They took along all their household furnishings, a few milk cows and three or four horses. After a three-day journey they arrived at their new home.

They lived in tents while their two-story frame house was built on the homestead Peter bought the year before. They also built a one-room, frame schoolhouse, called Snyder School that served as both church and community social center. Peter's daughter, Maude, was the school's first teacher. Although most of the farmland was not irrigated, Peter built an irrigation system supplied by a large pond and a well, enabling him to grow peaches, watermelons and strawberries among other cash crops.

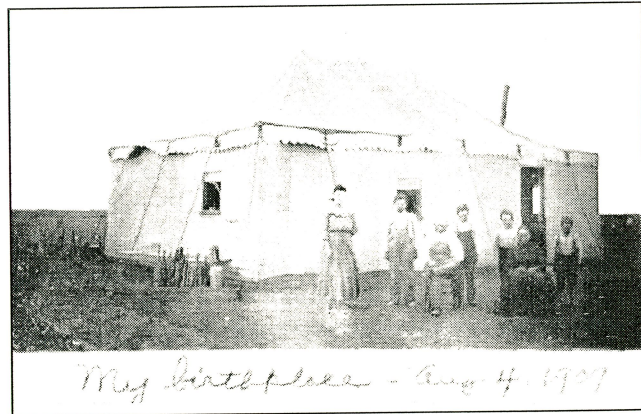
Other pioneers, Mennonite and non-Mennonite, joined the Snyder colony, from scattered communities across the Midwest, eventually totaling twenty-seven families. But the community did not last. By 1921 the dis-

couraged settlers began selling out and moving to more established communities. Only one family stayed. Poor crops, dust storms, prairie fires, insect invasions, hailstorms, and the severe droughts of 1915 and 1916 disheartened them. The pioneering farmers also discovered their sons did not share their enthusiasm for farming which had driven the westward expansion since the 1736 arrival of John Schneider. The community disbanded by 1925.

Peter and Ida moved to Hesston, Kansas in 1921. Peter's mother, Elizabeth, died in 1928 and was buried at Eastlawn Cemetery near



John R. and Elizabeth Snyder boarding the Case automobile for a look at farmland at Plainview, Texas in 1906, while the land agent (left) and Peter B. and Ida (in the car) look on. Peter made three inspection trips in 1906 to show fellow Mennonites the rich farmland around Plainview. (Credit: James A. Snyder)



This tent served as the Snyders' first home. Grace was born here in 1907. (Credit: James A. Snyder)

Hesston. Peter's father, John R., had died in 1920 and was buried in the Plainview, Texas municipal cemetery. Peter's six sons went their separate ways. Two settled in Ohio—Orville at Orrville, and John at Wadsworth. Joe lived in California and Michigan, Paul moved near his wife's home in Kalona, Iowa, Mark settled in La Junta, Colorado, and Vernon took up farming near Ashley, Michigan.

Susie's husband farmed near Goshen, Indiana, and Grace's husband farmed at St. Johns, Michigan.

The 185-year tradition of farming American soil came to an abrupt halt for the Snyders in 1921. Then it took a detour as John, Susie, Vernon and Grace tried to make farming pay for one more generation. In addition to farming, Orville's son, Harold, worked at an agricultural research center the last fifteen years of his life. He likely deserves the honor of being the last Snyder farmer in the Peter B. lineage, unless there are some "gentlemen farmers" continuing a rural existence while working other jobs.

As a tribute to the Mennonite colonists who first broke the virgin prairie in Plainview, Texas, the Hale County Historical Commission placed a historical marker at the site of the former Snyder School on April 22, 1978. The tribute recognizes these pioneers, banded together by a common faith, who endured many hardships, and left a cultural and religious influence upon the place which still bears the name, Snyder Community. The Snyder School is located on FM 400 road about

five miles south of Plainview and two miles east of where the community had sprung up in 1906. Peter's two-story house still stands on the south side of the road four or five miles south of town, easily visible from a distance. In recent years, modern irrigation has created a luxurious stand of corn on Peter's former land, which he could only have dreamed of ninety years ago.

The Hale County Historical Society printed the following tribute to this community in their quarterly publication, *Hale County History*, in 1977:

"Within the first four or five years after the Mennonite Colony was founded, the rapid influx of several Mennonite families stands as a testimony to the influence of Peter B. Snyder and the

long their tenure, these fourteen or fifteen families made vital contributions to Hale County History." ⁱ

And, finally, here is a listing of the early settlers of the Snyder Colony: Mr and Mrs. Jonas M. Kreider, Joseph E. Hartzler, Andrew and Elizabeth (Durr) Brenneman, Emanuel M. and Mattie (Blosser)

Hartman, Joel S. and Lena Guengerich, (m.2 to Edna Fisher), James J. Groff, Milton H. and Barbara Near, B.E. Martin, John Hartzler, Peter Camp, Ferdinand and Amanda (Hartman)



John R & Elizabeth (Bally) Snyder, parents of Peter B Snyder at home in Plainview ca: 1915. (Credit: James A. Snyder)



Snyder children and other church youth enjoying the pond, which Peter B Snyder created to improve his produce, which included strawberries and watermelons. (Credit: James A. Snyder)

zeal and dogged determination of a few of the migratory group who kept the settlement alive and growing. Some, discouraged by early hardships, gave up after a few years and returned to their homelands. In some cases, their grown sons and daughters remained, intermarried within the colony and became part of the permanent community. However

Rastetter, Charles Hamilton, Perry Smith, John R. and Elizabeth (Bally) Snyder, Peter B. and Ida (Grabill) Snyder, Jonas D. and Ida (Webber) Yoder, E.R. Shelley, and Arie and Gertrude M. (Bucy) Van Howeling. Non-Mennonite settlers between the years, 1910 and 1924, were: John H. and Caroline (Alverson) Buntin, George and Fannie Landis, John P. and Elsie (Hoxie) McGarr, William Ira and Lydia Clemantine (Springer) Johnson, R.L. and Telitha Eugenia (Griffeth) Wilson, Ben M. and Creola (McAnelly) Harris, Henry J. Ellis, O.C. McClain and Samuel Wiley and Emma (Columbia) Karrh. ²

—James A Snyder and his wife Maria L. Rivera live at 720 Seminole Tr. Hewitt, TX 76643, a suburb of Waco. Jim enjoys his current hobby of genealogical research & correspondence with newly found cousins who share his interest in genealogy.

ⁱ "Early Settlers of the Snyder Colony of Hale County," *Hale County History*, 1977, p. 13

I Wish I'd Been There: The Great Trek from Ukraine, 1943

by Marlene Epp

On September 12, 1943, Agatha Loewen, with her mother and two sisters, left her home in Gnadenfeld, Molotschna for the last time. Her family was among thousands of Mennonites who joined a caravan of horses and wagons many miles long on a refugee trek westward from Ukraine during the Second World War. As a historian who has explored and reflected upon these events for a number of years, I wish I'd been there to really see what it was like.

The 'great trek' out of the Soviet Union in 1943-44 followed two years of wartime German occupation of the 150-year-old settlements of south-ern Ukraine. Families like Agatha's had

already experienced over a decade of Stalinist terror that saw churches closed, property seized, and many individuals – mostly men – arrested, executed, or exiled. By the summer of 1943 the Red Army was advancing rapidly from the east to reclaim its territory and punish its citizens that sympathized with the occupiers. The German army was ordered to retreat and to take with it the remaining population of Soviet Germans, numbering approximately 350,000, of which about ten percent were Mennonite.

Agatha and her family were given barely two days to prepare for their refugee journey: they baked and

roasted zwieback, butchered any remaining livestock and packed the meat in lard, and heaped their wagons to overflowing with chests, sewing machines, bicycles, cooking pots, and whatever else they could fit. Many villagers were ordered to fill their houses with straw before they were torched by the army. I wonder how it felt to leave one's home,

wonder what it was like for mothers who had so little to feed their children, especially as the journey dragged on and the food supply diminished. I wonder how the refugees managed the ever-present fears – of airplane strafing, of a broken wagon, of rape, of capture, of not making it to the west.




"Exodus" by Agatha Schmidt, depicts the trek of Mennonites from Ukraine in 1943. (Credit: Mennonite Archives of Ontario, Canada)

knowing that family members, especially fathers, husbands, and brothers, were left behind in exile, possibly alive, but probably never to be seen again.

For the next four months, the refugees moved slowly westward, hoping each extended stop would be permanent but continually urged onward by sounds of the advancing warfront. I wonder what it would have been like to eat, sleep, and indeed live outdoors in incessant rain and the cold of approaching winter. As a mother with a cupboard full of snacks for my two growing boys, I

Agatha and her family were among the lucky ones to make it far enough to the west and eventually immigrate to Canada. Thousands of others were not: many died on the warfront or were overtaken by the Soviet army and sent back to labor camps in their country of birth. In recent months, images of refugees fleeing their homes in Afghanistan or languishing in camps in Pakistan have reminded me of the

many photographs I saw and stories I heard of Mennonite refugees fleeing their homes in 1943. The pictures, both visual and verbal, are remarkably similar. And the despair and suffering represent patterns of history that are too often repeated. As a historian, I wish I'd been on that 'great trek'. But really, I'm very grateful I was not. 

— Marlene Epp teaches Mennonite History and Peace & Conflict Studies at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario. Her book, *Women without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War*, was published by University of Toronto Press in 2000.

Book Review

by Rachel Waltner
Goosen

Julia Kasdorf, *The Body and the Book: Writing from a Mennonite Life*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. 207 pages, \$26.00 hardcover.

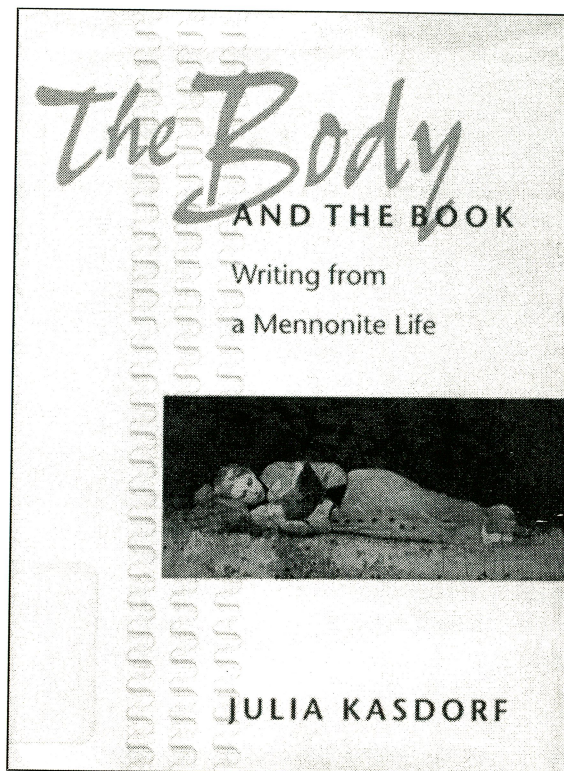
On my bookshelf are now three volumes by poet Julia Kasdorf, all published within the past decade. This latest, *The Body and the Book*, is a collection of ten essays, interspersed with some of the author's previously-published poems. Rounding out the collection are photographs, illustrations, and the poems of several other writers, Jeff Gundy's "How to Write the New Mennonite Poem" and David Wright's "A New Mennonite Replies to Julia Kasdorf."

Each essay explores themes familiar from Kasdorf's poetry – her Amish and Mennonite heritage and her upbringing in Pennsylvania, especially childhood summers spent with extended family in Mifflin County's "Big Valley"; her sense of forged identity and but also dislocation as a result of moving between rural communities and eastern cities (Pittsburgh, New York); relationships with family, friends, and acquaintances; and sexuality. But while these themes all surface repeatedly, the idea of vocation, and especially the artist's work in relation to her audience, is central.

Kasdorf tells us early on that "the body" of her title connotes several specific meanings: the religious community, as in "one body" and "the Body of Christ," as well as the

physical bodies of her subjects. Meanwhile, "the book" refers variously to the Bible, the *Martyrs' Mirror*, and even to particular books that she and others have written. Since this is a self-study, "the book" also literally means the work at hand, the product of Kasdorf's labors to write out of her own experience for Mennonites and others. Readers' responses to her writings – whether warmly receptive, mildly critical, or personally offended – mediate

ed or efficient plans for combating world hunger, but it satisfies a basic human need to do something concrete in the face of cruel and confusing times. . . . So in the spirit of the meat canner, I offer these essays: They are composed for relief from whatever was at hand in my life: memory, stories, treasurers, trauma, and the need to make meaning out of loss and change" (pp. xiv-xv).



Kasdorf's identity as an interpreter of Mennonite experience.

Kasdorf has a gift for the metaphoric. She likens the process and effects of her own literary endeavors to the extraordinary but eminently practical Mennonite Central Committee meat canner:

"Perhaps the canner does not comply with the most sophisticat-

In a 1995 conversation, Kasdorf commented on differences between prose and poetry, suggesting that expository writing has the potential to be more threatening to readers than does poetry: "Maybe this is what is comes down to: There are the official interpreters of the community, and then when there's an unofficial interpreter, that's quite threatening ... Poetry you can sort of fudge. But [with prose], you're writing in plain English."¹

By moving to "plain English," but not abandoning her critical stance toward Mennonite church traditions and institutional life, Kasdorf lets readers in on autobiographical details that help to illuminate her passion for writing. In pre-adolescence, she says, "I began compulsively to narrate my life in school tablets . . . I shaped whatever had happened that day into words. In order to have something to write each evening, I developed the habits of watching and converting experience into language" (p. 12). This child's observant eye, translated into narrative, she recalls, was stimulated by travels back and forth between her own home in western Pennsylvania

and the Amish and conservative Mennonite cultures carved out by her relatives in the Big Valley. Sensitivity to her surroundings was also helped along by folk like her grandmother Bertha Peachey Spicher Sharpe (sic.), who Kasdorf calls “my link to the Valley, keeper of its stories, guide and teacher of its ways, cook of its foods—my Mennonite muse” (p. 17). Kasdorf writes about Mennonite experience from many angles, but with particular focus on an ethnicity that is specific to her own Pennsylvania family heritage with its mix of “plain” and “non-plain” cultural expressions. She knows, given the varied ethnic and geographic threads of Mennonite history, that her characterizations are specific to time and place — not universal.

Moving to “plain English” but simultaneously defending a poet’s sensibilities allows Kasdorf to discuss

what she sees most lamentable about Mennonite and Amish traditions and ethos. Her portrayals of Mennonite institutions and leaders are, more often than not, cranky. Kasdorf looks for situations, historical and contemporary, where male leaders have received recognition and legitimization for their deeds, while overtly or tacitly contributing to the silence of others. This subject is explored in the book’s weakest essay, a musing on the legacy of H. S. Bender, and in a more provocative essay, on the tribulations in 1948 of Goshen-area Amish Bishop Samuel Hochstetler and his daughter Lucy Hochstetler. The Hochstetler case involved legal action against the Amish leader for his treatment of his mentally ill daughter. Kasdorf scrutinizes two well-respected Mennonite leaders who involved themselves in the case — Goshen College professors Guy F.

Hershberger and John Umble — by publicly coming to the defense of the maligned Amishman (an understandable impulse, in Kasdorf’s view), but yet giving little attention to the predicament of Bishop Hochstetler’s daughter Lucy (a transgression, in Kasdorf’s view).


It is not surprising that patriarchal stories, shortcomings, and sins are among Kasdorf’s complaints about the recent Mennonite past. Kasdorf observes that she came of age in the 1970s when societal changes brought about by the women’s liberation movement were readily apparent; yet subordination of women remained a feature of congregational life. Others seemed to assume that she would not

be a church leader, even though she was a baptized, active member of her congregation and denomination. She perceived that she “was not being groomed to become a prince of the

church,” and later came to regard this subtle gender differentiation as betrayal: “Great freedom came with slight expectations” (p. 139). Elsewhere in *The Body and the Book*, Kasdorf writes about having eventually left the Mennonite Church and making the Episcopal Church her spiritual home.

I identify with Kasdorf’s assessment of the costs — personal and church-wide — that came with privileging boys (not girls) in the proverbial “tap on the shoulder” a generation and more ago. Other readers will identify with other stories she divulges from her own experience: the twists and turns in perception that result from digging through historical archives; the treasured story of a child’s conversation with one of many hobos who stopped by an Amish home during the Great

Depression; or even, perhaps, Kasdorf’s trauma, perpetrated over a number of years by a lecherous neighbor man. Again, these are stories Kasdorf offers to her readers for “relief,” not least her own.

Kasdorf relishes being an outsider but still sees herself as a daughter of the faith tradition, and she offers *The Body and the Book* as a sign of her rootedness and continuing interest, even if she is not often present in Mennonite meetingplaces or personally engaged in the church’s business. Given her movement away from Mennonite people and places, how long will she claim authority as an interpreter of Mennonite life? It’s an open question, not answered by this body of writings. But I’ll look for the emergence of another volume of poetry from Kasdorf, a few years from now, to see where she’s heading. 

—Rachel Waltner Goossen teaches history at Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas

¹ Kasdorf quotation from Sheri Hostetler, “Interview — Poet Julia Kasdorf: Straddling Two Worlds With Stories, *Mennonot*, Issue 4, February 1995.

Managing Mennonite Memory:

Mennonite Board of Missions, 1882-2002

(Eighth in a Series)

by Dennis Stoesz

Last year, Ethel Hoffman of the Mennonite Board of Missions (MBM) at Elkhart, Indiana, initiated a push to work with its older records. This was done to anticipate the completely new organization, Mennonite Mission Network, which would begin February 1, 2002. The old had to go to make room for the new. This mission organization also wanted to reflect on its 120-year history, and some of this information was in those old files.

In the end, work was completed by four departments: Communications, Global Ministries, Human Resources, and Services and Facilities. Archival records were then transferred from these offices to the Church Archives at Goshen, Indiana. This then gave me a chance to write this report on the things I learned as I assisted this mission agency to work through its inactive and archival records.

Decentralized Organization and Centralized Coordinator Role

Unlike Mennonite Central Committee with its centralized records management system, the Mennonite Board of Missions was decentralized. Each department was responsible for its own inactive and archival records. Hoffman served as coordinator of office services, and often took initiative to work with the older files of the departments.



Ethel Hoffman, coordinator of office services, and Tim Voliva examine some historical photographs at the beginning of the project at the Mennonite Board of Missions, January 2001. (Credit: Dennis Stoesz)

I have found this centralized role of coordinator important at MBM. Hoffman was the one who did all the paperwork connected with the transfer of materials to the Archives. She also kept a complete list (inventory) of the archival files found at the Archives at her desk. In this way she knew where to look for the historical documents, and how they had been organized. She also directed the departments on how to prepare the files, and how to type out an inventory listing.

I find it interesting that this coordinator role was housed with the services division of the organization. This division looked after finances, computers and personnel of MBM. Through the years this department has also looked after all the facilities. And I guess this could mean something as practical as knowing what to do with all those filing cabinets full of old documents. At Mennonite Media, in Harrisonburg, Virginia (a division of MBM), it is the business manager who assumes this role.

The need to do something with the old files, however, is often recognized first by the department. Sometimes the filing cabinet gets too full or, as in this case, the organization goes through a restructuring.

In the end, the work of going through the files fell on persons within the four departments mentioned above, and each story was a bit different.

Services and Facilities **Department, 1947-2001**

It was Ethel Hoffman herself who culled and prepared the files of this department for the Archives. She had been involved with this office since the early 1980s, so she knew the files well. This department began in 1980 and became separate from the executive office. Maybe this beginning was a result of the increased responsibility of managing the Mennonite Offices building at 500 South Main Street into which MBM had moved in 1975. The building was purchased in 1974 as a cooperative venture between Greencroft, a corporation providing housing for senior citizens, and three program boards of the Mennonite Church. The Mennonite Offices occupied the first three floors, and occupying the top six floors of this former hotel was Greencroft Center.

None of these files had ever been archived. Some that dated back to 1947. Many were from 1974-96 which included records of the "Greencroft / Mennonites Offices" relationship. The files also showed the activities of the department in relation to the office handbook, the social committee, the staff meetings of the secretaries and administrative assistants, the library, and the auxiliary of MBM. The files also showed how MBM already had an archival policy in place in 1962 dealing with its records.



Mennonite Offices located in downtown Elkhart, Indiana, at 500 S. Main Street. The building was purchased in 1974-75, as a cooperative venture between Greencroft (housing for senior citizens) and three Mennonite program boards: Mennonite Board of Missions, Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries and Mennonite Board of Education. Today, 2002, it houses a portion of the staff of the new Mennonite Mission Network, the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board and the Mennonite Board of Education. (Credit: Dennis Stoesz)

In the end, Hoffman kept one box of materials (1.25 linear feet), and transferred it to the Archives on November 5, 2001. She also prepared an introduction to the inventory list of files explaining the history of the department from 1980-2001.

Overseas Personnel Files, **1899-1984 (Global Ministries)**

A second batch of files that needed to be gone through were the overseas personnel files. This job fell on Deborah Byler and Diana Cook of the Human Resources Department. The files of North American personnel had been transferred to the

Archives in 1962 already, since most of these included shorter-term personnel. And these personnel files had been sent to the Archives on a regular basis since then. The files for the long-term overseas missionaries, however, had been maintained by the Global Ministries Department all these years. And they had not been archived. When the management of all personnel files was centralized, it fell on the Human Resources office to prepare the files for the Archives.

This work began already in August 2000, and the first thing the staff did was to visit the Archives. They wanted to see what was in those short-term personnel files, and wanted to get an idea how one would go about this work. The work lasted over a year, and eventually over 250 personnel files were prepared and transferred to the Archives on November

5, 2001. The files filled three boxes (3.75 linear feet).

Staff found that the files dated back to 1899, with persons like Jacob Burkhard (1900-06) and his spouse Mary (Yoder) Burkhard, 1900-15, who served in India. The files contained such things as application forms, doctrinal statements, pictures, and newspaper articles about the workers. Staff prepared an inventory listing, including each person by last name and first name, and gave the beginning and end dates of the file. A short introduction was also added.

The question was also raised about the policy governing access to these files. These files remain *Restricted*, and any requests for information need to be channeled through the Human Resources Department. The personnel records are also found on a database

on the computer maintained by that office. Information includes such things as name, address, location served and years served. And the staff are continually trying to maintain an up-to-date and accurate database on personnel, reaching back to the beginnings of the Mission Board in 1882.

Global Ministries (Overseas) Files, 1985-90

It was on my visit with Rachel Good in October 2001 that I gained the most insight into the work of culling and weeding files. Good had already begun work on these overseas files a year or two earlier since they filled quite a few file drawers. In the end the final quantity of files filled five boxes (6 linear feet). It was in July of 2001 that these files had been transferred to the Archives. This inventory listing included the names of all the persons who had worked in the Global Ministries Department during that five-year period, 1985-90, including the dates they served, and their area of work.

Back in 1995, I myself had tried to weed and cull an earlier batch of overseas files, dating from 1980-84. I did well with the list of file titles, the dates, and a brief introduction. But I had trouble deciding what correspondence and reports in these files were of long-term archival value. So when I saw these 1985-90 files come into the Archives, I immediately made an appointment to have on-the-job training from Good.

She first gave me a tour of the Global Ministries offices, and showed me thirteen drawers of inactive overseas files dating from 1990-2000. Usually files were kept active for one year. Then they were culled and weeded and transferred to the inactive "Archive" drawers, where they continued to be accessible to staff for nine more years. After the files were



Diana Cook, of the Human Resources Department, shows how the personnel records are organized and retrieved on the database, November 2001. (Credit: Dennis Stoesz)



Rachel Good shows how the files are organized in the Latin American section of the Global Ministries (Overseas) Department, November 2001. (Credit: Dennis Stoesz)

ten years old, they were culled and weeded again, and then transferred to the Archives in sets of five years.

These files contained correspondence and reports of the work being carried out in various places overseas. The first rule of thumb was "Does the letter provide a good description of the work being carried out?" Second, "Does the letter answer questions as to who (personnel) and their specific ministry?" The persons could be missionaries or someone from the local church. For example, a report of an administrative trip to the country should be kept. But just as important would be a report from a local pastor or administrator of that country. And

third, "Does the letter show any change to the program and personnel?" This change could be a decision to start a new ministry, or it could show the end or transfer of a program to another person or organization. In the end, a good sample of the key correspondence and reports are kept.

What then not to keep? A notice of a meeting, routine travel arrangements, news articles, carbon copies of letters which are not the main program of this Global Ministries department, articles written on situations which do not come from primary persons involved, schedules, and correspondence that does not add to the letters mentioned above. Sampling is also a

good method to retain certain types of materials in the file, without having to keep every one. This can pertain to newsletters, for example. The only real question that came up was whether minutes of the local church conference should be kept in the Global Ministries files. Since the responsibility of keeping these records rests with the church, these minutes were taken out of the files and sent to the Archives to be placed in that conference's archival collection: for example, the Argentina Mennonite Conference.

In the end, about 60-75% of the material is weeded out of the files and 25-40% kept. This however, seems to me to be more of an art than a science. It means one has to become acquainted with the program and the people in order to know what documents will have long-term value in telling the story of God's work around the world, and who the persons were who carried out this ministry. The hope is that some guidelines can be prepared for staff whose interest and gifts are in working through old files.

Historical Photographs, 1900-1995

While the culling and weeding project was a challenge, I much more enjoyed helping out in organizing the historical photographs. This project was urgently needed because the Mission Board was planning to publish two commemorative issues in their magazine *Missions Now*. The Communications Department was also working on a chronological time line for their web site, and needed illustrations.

Communications Director Tom Price had asked one of their staff persons, Tim Voliva, to work with these photographs. Voliva was a senior history student at Goshen College, and was doing an internship at the Mission

Board. Voliva soon called me for help, and we were able to come up with a system to organize the photographs.

These photographs filled sixteen boxes (24 linear feet), and included almost 1,000 files. The files were not in any order, and the file labels did not include dates. There seemed to be some files dating back to the late 1930s, with others from the 1980s. It seemed like the photographs had been filed alphabetically by country or city, and that this had been kept up for 5-10 years. But as the amount of photographs kept growing, and as only the most recent photographs were needed for ongoing publicity, it was difficult to keep the older sections in order.

Tim Voliva started by numbering each folder, giving it a title, and indicating the beginning and ending dates of the photographs found in each file. He entered all this into the computer.

Tim Voliva (on left) and Tom Price, director of communications, examine the historical photographs after they were transferred into acid-free file folders and boxes, May 2001. (Credit: Dennis Stoesz)



(This took four months.) With the use of the sort function in the computer word-processing program, he could then sort the whole section alphabetically. The files were then physically rearranged according to the computer printout. The historical photographs thus became accessible to the Communication Department. They were transferred to the Archives in January 2002.

Conclusion


I hope this report on the work of these four mission departments shows how one works with a variety of records in an organization. It shows how different gifts are needed to work with the older files. And I have valued the role of a central coordinator, especially in a decentralized organization, in continually reminding departments to stay on top of their inactive and historical materials.



—Dennis Stoesz is archivist at Mennonite Church USA Archives, Goshen, IN.

Continued from page 5

to apply for CO status. I would encourage all of our youth and young adults to think deeply now about their beliefs, record them and file their position with MCC.

I'd like to close by asking all of you to read with me what is written on the front of your bulletins. We have been called to serve a Lord whose ways are different from the government; we belong to what Donald Kraybill has called the "Upside Down Kingdom." It seems entirely appropriate to me to read this quote and to mean every word of it, and for us to proclaim together that our consciences lead us to follow Christ, our King: "I pledge allegiance to the cross of Jesus Christ, and to the forgiveness for which it stands, One church under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all" (Susan Clemmer Steiner). 

— Anne Yoder is archivist at Swarthmore (Pa.) College Peace Collection, and is a member of West Philadelphia Mennonite Fellowship. For citations you may contact the author at ayoder1@swarthmore.edu. You may also access Yoder's "List of World War I Conscientious Objectors" at http://www.swarthmore.edu/Library/peace/conscientiousobjection/WWI_COs.coverpage.htm

The Back Page

We are pleased to have received a \$10,000 grant to organize the John Howard Yoder papers. The grant awarded by Schowalter Foundation will be used to organize, preserve and index the first 128 boxes of the late John Howard Yoder papers in Mennonite Church USA Archives—Goshen, Ind. Yoder began depositing his papers here in 1971.

John Howard Yoder is recognized as one of the most influential theologians of the 20th century. Yoder's impact on students, scholars and ordinary Christians went beyond his own Mennonite Church and his own nation. His *Politics of Jesus* (1972) opened a theological discussion of the radical nature of Jesus' message that continues to this day.

Yoder's message of biblical non-resistance, his wide-ranging ecumenical engagement with other denominations and faith traditions and his stature in the theological community



Working with archivist Dennis Stoesz to organize the collection are student assistants Monica Zimmerman and Laura Yoder. Director John Sharp, left, wrote the grant application. (Credit: Rhoda Stoesz)

make his collection one of the most significant recent additions to the archives in Goshen in the past decade. The collection is likely to bring scholars from around the world

for generations to come. When completed, the detailed inventories, listing the many parts of this collection, will be posted on the Web for broader visibility. *L*

Visit our web sites at www.goshen.edu/mcarchives/ and www.bethelks.edu/services/mla

Mennonite Historical Bulletin

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Setting the Record Straight on Pieter Plockhoy — Delaware's First Mennonite

by K. Varden Leasa

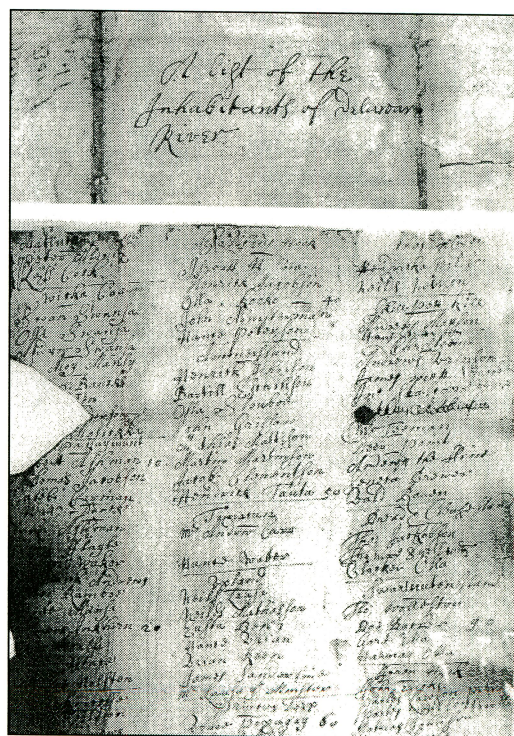
The following article was written for the Delaware Mennonite Historical Society and an abbreviated version appeared in that society's first newsletter in June 2002. But because the author makes known significant new information on the 1663 Mennonite settlement in Delaware, it is offered here to reach a larger readership. The following conclusion to the Plockhoy article in the Mennonite Encyclopedia must be substantially revised in light of our new knowledge:

"A settlement of 41 persons was made in America in 1663 at Horekill on the Delaware, but was destroyed after a brief year of existence in the Anglo-Dutch war of 1664. Plockhoy's active career apparently came to an abrupt end, due in part no doubt to the fact that he became blind. Although he and his wife continued to reside in the neighborhood of Lewes, Del., under English rule for thirty years, they finally sought and found refuge in the new Mennonite settlement at Germantown, Pa., where they lived as public charges for their last six or more years (1694-1700)" [ME, IV, 196].

In 1913 and 1914 two Amish Mennonite brothers-in-law, Valentine Bender and William Tressler from

Garrett County, Maryland, pioneered a Mennonite community near Greenwood, Sussex County, Delaware. It is doubtful these first settlers had knowledge of what happened in Sussex County exactly 250 years earlier—in 1663-64—some thirty miles to the southeast. Along a creek known as the Whorekill, perhaps on the site of present-day Lewes, a Dutch Mennonite named Pieter Cornelisen Plockhoy established a Christian, cooperative colony in July 1663. In the late summer of 1664 the colony was attacked by a party of British marines—attacked so violently that in the words of one report the settlement was "destroyed ... to a very naile."¹

The story of Plockhoy's settlement at the Whorekill has long been a standard feature of "chapter one" in American Mennonite history books.² It is usually cited as the first Mennonite community in the New World. Because the historical facts are so meager, the Plockhoy story varies little from book to book. Usually included are Pieter Cornelisen Plockhoy's Mennonite



1671 Census of the Delaware, by Dr. Peter Stebbins Craig. (Published by the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. 1999, opposite p. 5. Used by permission.)

origins, his philosophical and reforming activities in Europe, his plan for a utopian nondenominational, egalitarian, democratic colony in America, the ocean voyage with his rather small number of fellow pioneers, the brief (and largely undocumented) life of the community on the primeval Delaware coast, its destruction by the British in 1664, and the claim that after 1664 there is virtually no record

of the community or of Plockhoy, *except* for one last event. The story goes, that about 1694, thirty years later, the old and blind Pieter Plockhoy and wife, made their way north to Germantown where they were taken in, provided a house, and cared for by that (partly Mennonite) community.³

It is a nice story, but much of it is false. A newly discovered historical document and years of research by a dedicated genealogist have vastly expanded what we know about Pieter Plockhoy's Delaware settlement and at the same time necessitated some major revisions in the old story.

Although this new information has been available for several years, Plockhoy scholars do not seem to know about it. (As recently as January 2002 a major Mennonite journal retold

the old story.⁴) But here, in the *first* issue of the *first* Mennonite historical publication issued in the *first* state, you can read for the *first* time what really happened to the *first*



1665 map, locating Swaanendael and Horekil on the west bank of the Delaware River. (Reproduced from Harder, Leland and Marvin, Plockhoy from Zurick-zee, 1952)

Mennonite to settle in Delaware.⁵

But first, for those who have not heard the oft-told tale, here is a brief account of the life and ideas of this

man and an explanation of how the colony on the Whorekill came to be in the first place.

Pieter Cornelisen Plockhoy was born about 1625 in Zierikzee, in the province of Zeeland, about sixty miles southwest of Amsterdam. His family was Mennonite. Along with a friend of his, Galenus Abrahams de Haan, whose father was the local Mennonite pastor, young Pieter headed for Amsterdam. Here both Plockhoy and de Haan threw themselves into the intellectual and spiritual life of then mighty Holland's largest city. De Haan became the pastor of the Lamists—the more liberal of Amsterdam's Mennonites. And Plockhoy became a crusading reformer and pamphleteer with a plan for a Christian socialist community. Even within the liberal, progressive wing of the Dutch Mennonite church,

Plockhoy and his ideas were considered radical and utopian.⁶

These ideas had a religious and a

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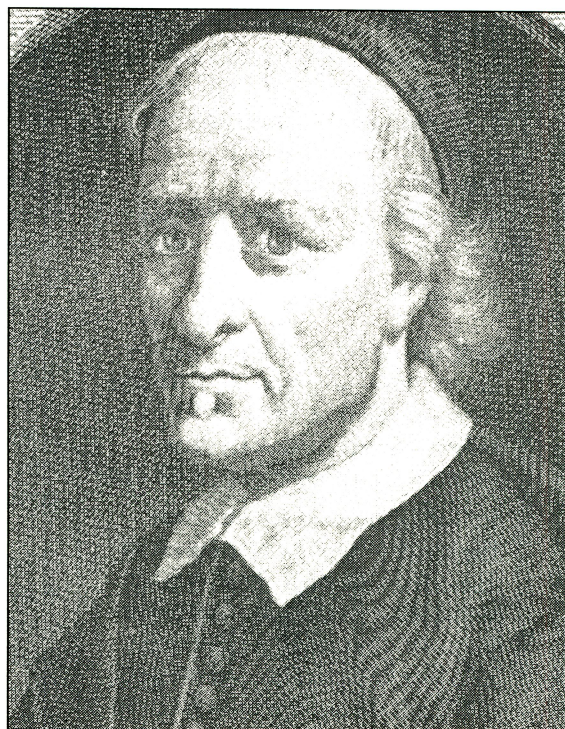
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Microfilms of Volumes I-L of the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* are available from ProQuest Information and Learning, 300 N Zeeb Rd, PO Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346.

socioeconomic dimension. In religious matters young Pieter was an active Collegiant—part of a Dutch ecumenical group that sought to bring about a universal Christendom and opposed schism, doctrine and dogma. The point was to bring Christians together and break down the walls between them. Drawing participants from Mennonite and other denominations, Collegiants favored absolute tolerance for all opinions, freedom of thought and conscience, reason over tradition, no state church, no professional clergy and almost no organization. Their Taizé-like idea of “church” was a group of Christians from diverse backgrounds getting together to read and discuss the Scriptures.⁷

Plockhoy embraced the Collegiant ideals completely. But as social critic and reformer he wrote much more on social and economic issues than on religious matters. He published a number of pamphlets and calls for action with titles like, *A Way Propounded to Make the Poor in these and other Nations Happy*. He spent several years in England attempting to persuade the Puritan government of Oliver Cromwell to sponsor the utopian society he was envisioning—“a Christian, socialistic settlement” with a foundation of equality, democracy and freedom. Plockhoy devised elaborate plans for the smooth functioning of his Christian socialist colony and ultimately 117 Articles of Association, which read like a virtual modern democratic constitution! When his hopes for British support evaporated in the restoration of the monarchy, Plockhoy returned to Holland and presented his scheme more successfully to the Amsterdam City Council.

Amsterdam had recently taken control of the southern portion of New Netherlands. The Dutch possessions in America at that time consisted of present-day New York south to the Maryland border. Plockhoy’s plan was to settle his colony along the South River of New Netherlands. (The South River was the Dutch term for the Delaware River. The Hudson was the North River.) His negotia-



Galenus Abrahams de Haan, 1622-1706, friend of Plockhoy.
(Mennonite Church USA Archives—Goshen, Mennonite Encyclopedia Collection)

tions with the Amsterdam City Council dragged on for several years.⁸

In April 1662, these negotiations were successfully concluded and the City Council approved a settlement of twenty-five “Mennonist” families, agreeing to aid, assist and give each of them as much land as they could use. Plockhoy had a hard time finding twenty-five families to emigrate. (He had hoped for a hundred.⁹) I believe no more than a couple of the families he took along to Delaware

were Mennonite. The Dutch were never greatly interested in emigrating to America. Holland was the most developed and civilized place on earth in the 1600s. Why risk a six-to-eight-week ocean voyage and the dangers of a savage wilderness when you already enjoyed “the good life”? Plockhoy’s Mennonite church was the progressive and liberal Lamb congregation—the majority of whom

were probably well-to-do. I imagine he had to scour the back streets of Amsterdam to find even twenty families to take the plunge with him into the great unknown.¹⁰ In *A Brief Account of the New Netherlands Situation* Plockhoy noted that one of his main objectives in starting the colony was “... the relief of many aggrieved and languishing families.” And indeed I think the majority of his colonists were drawn from the urban poor.¹¹

Finally, on the fifth of May 1663 this relatively small group (approximately forty people) embarked on a ship, the *St. Jacob*, headed for America. (The *Mayflower*, just forty-three years earlier, had carried 101, more than twice as many, to Plymouth.) The *St. Jacob* arrived uneventfully on

July 28th at New Amstel (today’s New Castle), after having left “41 souls with their baggage and farm utensils at the Horekil.”¹²

The material just skimmed over is presented more fully in two articles in the 1949 *Mennonite Quarterly Review* by Irvin B. Horst and Leland Harder, as well as in a full-length book by Harder and his brother Marvin three years later.¹³ In fact, the story of Pieter Cornelisen Plockhoy and his Christian socialist colony is full of rich and well-reported detail

almost until that very day when the settlers disembarked from the *St. Jacob* and walked across the sand at Cape Henlopen toward the land chosen for their new home. All studies recount with frustrating lack of detail what happened to Plockhoy's Whorekill Colony a little over a year later. In August 1664, after New Netherlands fell to the English, a British naval force was sent to the lands along the Delaware to subjugate the Dutch forts and settlements there. In early September this force, dispatched (and perhaps commanded) by Sir Robert Carr, appeared at the Whorekill and plundered, burned and to a great extent destroyed the Dutch settlement. Until recently, that is as far as the record went. Mennonite historian Leland Harder wrote, "There remains no record of the fate of the members of the colony, save Plockhoy himself."¹⁴

Historian Samuel W. Pennypacker (later a governor of Pennsylvania) said much the same thing in 1883: "History throws no light on the subject, and of contemporary documents there are none."¹⁵ Pennypacker became interested in his Mennonite ancestors and while researching them also discovered the Plockhoy story.¹⁶ He was the first to notice the Plockhoy episode in the Germantown *Ratbuch* (city council records) and it was Pennypacker who mistakenly identified the Plockhoy couple mentioned in those records—a misidentification that was repeated by nearly every article on Plockhoy for the next 120 years! A quick glance at the relevant page in the Germantown *Ratbuch* reveals that the name of the man who threw himself on the mercy of the first permanent Mennonite community in America was not *Pieter* but *Cornelis*! Why did not the name "Cornelis" Plockhoy set off alarms for the many 20th century historians who read over those and other legal records covering the period

1680 to 1700? Did they all believe that Pieter Cornelisen Plockhoy had a first and a middle name, Pieter and Cornelis, either of which could be used to denote him? Did none of them think of applying their knowledge of Dutch naming practice to this matter? Most of them knew that Cornelisen was a patronymic and that it indicated only the name of Pieter's father. Irvin Buckwalter Horst, in his Plockhoy article in *Mennonite Quarterly Review* in July 1949 discusses various Dutch authorities on Plockhoy and mentions that one of them, Professor de Hoop Scheffer, states "inaccurately" that "Plockhoy's son came to Germantown." No, Irvin, de Hoop Scheffer was one of the few who were accurate!¹⁷

In two issues of the *Pennsylvania Genealogical Magazine* of 1998 and a separate book in 1999, Dr. Peter Stebbins Craig, genealogist and retired Washington lawyer, published his *1671 Census of the Delaware*.¹⁸ The result of nearly fifteen years of research on the early families who settled the area along the Delaware River, Dr. Craig used a previously unknown historical document along with land and probate records to provide family histories of these difficult-to-research pioneers.

The introduction to Craig's book states that the settlements on the Delaware had been a part of the Province of New York since 1664 "but few of its residents took the trouble to pay two beavers for a New York patent and the collection of quitrents was far less than it should have been. To correct this situation, in 1671 a census was taken of former New Sweden and a similar one at Whorekill (Lewes, Delaware). The resulting censuses, *each on a single piece of paper, have rested in the New York archives ever since, largely overlooked by historians and genealogists* (emphasis mine)."¹⁹

Dr. Peter Craig's discovery of the May 1671 Whorekill Census, and his genealogical conclusions based on it, explicitly and implicitly tell us a great deal about Pieter Cornelisen Plockhoy's settlement. This is nothing less than a bombshell in Plockhoy studies. Yet three years later Craig's work seems to have gone completely unnoticed by American Mennonite and European historians!

The Whorekill census was taken less than seven years after Sir Robert Carr's men "wiped out" the settlement, or in the words of Sheriff van Sweringen at New Castle, "almost succeeded in "destroying the quaking society of Plockhoy to a naile." Peter Craig has used the unusually detailed census along with land and probate records to indicate who was living at the Whorekill in 1671 and how they were connected to one another. This is an excellent example of how historical mysteries can be solved by genealogists.

Craig writes: "South of New Castle there were no European settlers until one reached the Whorekill, presently known as Lewes, Sussex County, Delaware. A fort had been established at this location by the Dutch in 1659, but no settlement took place until July 1663, when Pieter Cornelisen Plockhoy and forty other Mennonites arrived from Amsterdam on the *St. Jacob*. When the English captured the Delaware in 1664 the Whorekill settlements were plundered. By 1671 the community was a mixture of Dutch and English residents."²⁰

The main point for Mennonite historians and Plockhoy students is clear. The settlement he founded lived on after being plundered by the British, probably not in the utopian form he had envisioned, but it *did* continue to exist.

So what other revelations are found

in Dr. Craig's articles and book?

First, the question of the identity of Plockhoy's settlers is partially answered. The nucleus consisted of *his own family*—a brother and a sister. In 1671 the Whorekill Census was taken by Plockhoy's brother-in-law, Helmanus Wiltbanck. Wiltbanck was married to Plockhoy's sister, Janneken Cornelis. In 1671, the Wiltbancks had two children: Cornelis and Abraham. If the Wiltbancks were Mennonite, there is no evidence thereof.²¹ Pieter Plockhoy's brother, Harmen Cornelisen, was also living at Whorekill in 1671, and like the Wiltbancks, probably was an original settler of the colony. What is particularly fascinating about Harmen is that he had been a Dutch soldier posted at Fort Sekonnessinck near the Whorekill in 1660. As Craig notes: "He seems to have been influential in persuading his brother to choose the Whorekill for his Mennonite settlement." Harmen was a soldier and Indian trader and used a different surname than his brother (*Spycker*, meaning "nail"; *Plockhoy* means a "haystack"). A military man, Harmen does not look like a Mennonite.²²

Second, Craig states conclusively: "Analysis of this census shows that Pieter Cornelisen Plockhoy from Zierikzee, Zeeland, Netherlands, had died soon after the Mennonite settlement was established and that his widow, who remarried Willem Clasen, was also dead [in 1671]. Leadership of the settlement had passed to Plockhoy's brother-in-law Helmanus Wiltbanck."²³ It looks as though this Willem Clasen was another of Plockhoy's first settlers. Willem was probably the butcher by that name in Manhattan in 1657. (Harmen Cornelisen was also in Manhattan in 1662, which suggests that Plockhoy drew some of his community from people already in

America.)²⁴

Widow Plockhoy and Willem Clasen had two daughters. One of them, Elizabeth, appears to have married John Hill in the early 1680s. That would place her birth in the mid-1660s, which, in turn, makes it probable that Pieter Cornelisen Plockhoy died as early as 1664.²⁵ Did he die



J. G. de Hoop Scheffer, 1819-1893, a Dutch scholar noted that Plockhoy's son, Cornelis, appeared in Germantown, rather than Pieter Plockhoy himself. (Mennonite Church USA Archives—Goshen, Mennonite Encyclopedia Collection)

defending his settlement against the British attacking party in September of that year? It is just as possible that the soldiers targeted him for death because he was the leader of a "quaking" colony.

There is no evidence in the census or the biographical details Craig has unearthed that the 1671 Whorekill settlement was unusual in any way or that there were any Mennonites living there. As I argue above, I believe there were very few Mennonites at the Whorekill from the beginning. One study claims that after the 1664

attack the cooperative society Plockhoy had started continued for a time.²⁶ The census proves that the community rebuilt and regrouped under Wiltbanck's leadership. But without Plockhoy's dynamic personality and vision, they were probably unable to sustain the unique, cooperative aspect of the settlement.

The fact that there was a sizable community at Whorekill in 1671 is proof of rebuilding after 1664. They had to rebuild again after a similar destruction in 1673 at the hands of troops from Maryland, who also claimed this region. A couple of men who set out for assistance during the 1673 attack were killed by Indians.²⁷ And the very first Dutch settlement in the area, Zwaanendael, was completely destroyed by Indians in 1630.²⁸


Third, a thorough examination of the inhabitants of the Delaware region in 1671—which extended on beyond Philadelphia to the north—yields quite a few Dutch, but very few who might have been part of Plockhoy's colony.²⁹ This supports my argument that the colony was largely composed of urban poor from Amsterdam, who took advantage of free passage back to the Netherlands after the violence of 1664.³⁰ I believe the continuity of the original Plockhoy settlement after 1664 and 1671, and the fact that many of the 1671 inhabitants are mentioned in Delaware land records as owning lots in the town of Lewes, suggest that the town of Lewes grew up precisely on the spot of Plockhoy's colony.

Fourth, a very interesting aspect of Craig's publications is that they give us the names of a large number of the soldiers who carried out the expedition against the Whorekill colony in 1664. Many of them settled in the region, most commonly at New Castle, the site of the fort and military center of the region. Captain

John Carr, of New Castle, was “the chief political and military officer on the Delaware. . . . John Carr and his brothers Andrew Carr and Patrick Carr had been part of Robert Carr’s invading force in 1664.”³¹ Names of other 1671 inhabitants whom Craig specifies as part of Carr’s force in 1664 are: Robert Scott, John Marshall, John Cousins, Jan Boyer, Thomas Snelling, Jacob Jansen, Thomas Wollaston, Edmund Cantwell, John Arskin, Dr. James Crawford, William Tom, William Sinclair, John Henry, and Charles Floyd.³²

Fifth and finally, Dr. Craig’s work straightens us out on who really walked into Germantown in the 1690s. It was *not* Pieter and his wife, but: “[t]he person moving to Germantown in 1693 was Pieter Cornelisen Plockhoy’s blind son, Cornelis Plockhoy [and his wife].”³³ In the 1671 census, Cornelis was still listed as a “child” in the household of his stepfather, Willem Clasen.³⁴ Records of the town of Lewes cited by various Plockhoy scholars as referring to Pieter Cornelisen Plockhoy actually involved his son Cornelis. Cornelis was not forced out of the area due to inability to build on a granted lot, as some writers allege. Rather, “[Cornelis] with his wife Judith deeded his Lewes lots to his cousin Cornelis Wiltbanck in December 1693 and moved to Germantown.”³⁵ This evidence of continuing family relationships, along with his name listed as beneficiary in the 1700 will of Jan Kipshaven of Lewes,³⁶ indicates that Cornelis Plockhoy was not bereft of friends and family as so many have suggested. His reasons for going to Germantown to retire may have had more to do with the fact that it was a nearby, more advanced community where low Dutch was spoken, than the reasons usually given. I doubt that Cornelis had much of a

Mennonite identity. He was probably born in the 1650s, or no later than 1662, in Holland and came to Delaware with his parents in 1663. Only if stepfather Willem Clasen was Mennonite would Cornelis have grown up in a Mennonite home, since his father died about 1664. In 1683 Cornelis was sworn in as a citizen of Pennsylvania and subject of the King of England. He was surely over twenty-one by then.³⁷ In 1693 he was probably no more than forty years old and his blindness, not his age, put him in need of special care.

In conclusion, it is time historians took notice of the genealogical detective work of Peter Stebbins Craig. He has given us the first really new information on Pieter Plockhoy and his colony since the work of Horst and Harder fifty years ago. It is also an encouraging and inspirational story. For over 325 years an old piece of parchment, the 1671 Whorekill Census, lay virtually unnoticed among the early records of New York—preserved yet silent and lost. Hunting answers to seventeenth-century Delaware puzzles in New York City led Craig to this buried nugget. That is good genealogy. That is good history. 

—K. Varden Leasa., while employed in the automotive business, is an active researcher of genealogical, local and church history, who lives with his family in, Downingtown, Pa. He wrote this article for the newsletter of the newly-founded Delaware Mennonite Historical Society in Greenwood, Delaware.

Endnotes

¹ Harold E. Huber, *With Eyes of Faith: A History of Greenwood Mennonite Church, Greenwood, Delaware—1914-1974* (Greenwood, Delaware, 1974), pp. 33-36. For the most complete account of Pieter Plockhoy and his Delaware colony, see Leland and Marvin Harder, *Plockhoy from*

Zurik-zee: The Study of a Dutch Reformer in Puritan England and Colonial America (Newton, Kans., 1952). A good short, popular treatment is Leland Harder’s article, “Pioneer of Christian Civilization in America,” *Mennonite Life*, IV (1) (January 1949). A similar, but more recent, sketch of Plockhoy is that of Bart Plantenga, “The Mystery of the Plockhoy Settlement in the Valley of the Swans,” *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*, LXII (2) (April 2001) and by the same author, “More on Plockhoy: A Commonwealth of Love and Equality,” *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*, LXIII (1) (January 2002). The quotation from Harder, *Plockhoy from Zurik-zee*, p. 63, original in New York Colonial Documents, III, p. 34.

² For example, Cornelius J. Dyck, *An Introduction to Mennonite History*, Third Edition (Herald Press, Scottdale, PA, and Waterloo, Ontario), p. 195.

³ Platenga, *MHB* (Apr 2001), pp. 12-13. Also *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, Vol. IV, Mennonite Publishing House, Scottdale, PA, p. 196.

⁴ Platenga, *MHB* (Jan 2002), p. 14.

⁵ Varden Leasa, “Who Was the First Mennonite in Delaware?,” *The Delaware Mennonite Historical Society Newsletter*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (June 2002), pp. 1-3.

⁶ This early biographical information on Plockhoy is gleaned from many sources, one of which is Leland Harder, “Plockhoy and His Settlement at Zwaanendael, 1663,” *Mennonite Weekly Review*, XXIII (3) July 1949, pp. 187-89 and *passim*.

⁷ A good treatment of Plockhoy’s beliefs and principles is probably Irvin B. Horst, “Pieter Cornelisz Plockhoy: An Apostle of the Collegiants,” *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, XXIII (3) (July 1949), pp. 161-185.

⁸ A reliable source for these negotiations between Plockhoy and the Amsterdam City Council is Leland & Marvin Harder, *Plockhoy from Zurik-zee*, pp. 48-62. (Hereafter referred to as Harder and Harder.)

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* At one point the City Council speaks of “several decent-minded families” that Plockhoy had recruited to go to America.

¹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 52-53; 97; 99.

¹² *Ibid.* pp. 62-63.

¹³ See notes numbered 1, 6 and 7 above.

¹⁴ Harder and Harder, *op cit.*, p. 63.

¹⁵ Samuel W. Pennypacker, *Historical and Biographical Sketches*. Philadelphia, 1883, p. 50, quoted in Harder and Harder, p. 63.

¹⁶ Horst, *op cit.*, p. 178, footnote 53.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. p. 179, footnote 56.

¹⁸ Peter Stebbins Craig, "1671 Census of the Delaware," *Pennsylvania Genealogical Magazine*, Vol. XL, no. 3 (Spring/Summer 1998), pp. 197-231; and Vol. XL, no. 4 (Fall/Winter 1998), pp. 314-360. Reprinted in book form as *1671 Census of the Delaware*, Peter Stebbins Craig, Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1999. Citations will be from the book.

¹⁹ Quotation appeared in a pre-publication sales pitch on the Internet on a web page that no longer exists. The author gives a similar (but less eloquent) explanation of the Delaware census in the book itself. Craig, 1999, pp. 2-3.

²⁰ Craig (1999), pp. 73-74.

²¹ Ibid, pp. 75-77.

²² Ibid, pp. 80-81. Craig adds in a footnote that "Plockhoy's proposal for his settlement, submitted in Amsterdam in 1662, showed a detailed knowledge of the Whorekill obtained from an unidentified soldier returning from there." (p. 80, footnote 298) That soldier was almost surely Plockhoy's brother!

²³ Ibid, p. 75.

²⁴ Ibid, pp. 76, 80.

²⁵ Ibid, pp. 76-77.

²⁶ Harder, *MWR* (1949), p. 196, footnote 34.

²⁷ Craig (1999), p. 74.

²⁸ Harder and Harder, pp. 186-87; Platenga (Apr. 2001), p. 11.

²⁹ Craig (1999), pp. 36-73 (particularly, pp. 57-73).

³⁰ Harder and Harder, p. 183.

³¹ Craig (1999), p. 58. I believe these three brothers were sons of Sir Robert Carr. Harder writes of the 1664 attack as led by "Sir Robert Carr, with his son." Harder, *Mennonite Life* (1949), p. 48.

³² Craig (1999), 41, 43-44, 64-66, 70.

³³ Ibid, p. 75, footnote 261.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 77.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid, footnote 280.

³⁷ C. H. B. Turner, *Some Records of Sussex County, Delaware*, Philadelphia: Allen, Lane & Scott, 1909, p. 87, cited in Harder, *MWR* (1949), p. 198.

From Cereal Boxes to Web Pages: Introducing our North Newton Archives

By John D. Thiesen

The Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas—the Archives part now being the Archives of Mennonite Church USA—North Newton—has multiple roots. The first president of Bethel College, C. H. Wedel, had an active interest in Mennonite history. He wrote a four-volume Mennonite history and probably was involved in some collecting of historical materials at the college. In those earlier

years, archival and library items and museum objects were collected together and were not thought of as separate categories in the way we would probably treat them today.

In 1911 at the triennial session of the General Conference in Bluffton, Ohio, a number of younger General Conference leaders, at the inspiration of C. H. Wedel who had died in 1910, formed a Mennonite Historical Association. H. R. Voth, a former General Conference missionary with



The home of the Archives of Mennonite Church USA—North Newton on the campus of Bethel College. (photo credit: jes)

the Hopi in Arizona, was active in the association and did most of the detail work, keeping detailed ledgers of historical items collected. H. P. Krehbiel was also an active promoter of historical interests and the Association's collections were kept at his Herald Publishing Company (*Mennonite Weekly Review*) for a time. After Voth's death in 1931 the Association became less active.

Abraham Warkentin, a Mennonite refugee from Russia in the 1920s, professor of German at Bethel College, and a pastor at First Mennonite Church, Newton, Kansas, became involved with historical collecting both with the Association and at the college. In 1939 the Association turned over its materials to a new General Conference Historical Committee. Some of the materials were moved to the college and some remained at the Herald Publishing Company. When Warkentin moved to Chicago in 1947 to be the first president of the General Conference seminary there, some of the materials went with him to the new institution (an egregious violation of present-day archival standards).

Cornelius Krahn, another Mennonite refugee from Russia, came to Bethel College in 1944 and became the most well-known promoter of historical collecting for the college and General Conference. His involvement from the 1940s to the 1970s made him almost synonymous with the Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel.

Also during these same decades, John F. Schmidt was the internal face of the archives, bringing organization to the records that had been and were being gathered, and serving researchers who wanted to use them. He also was the keeper of many oral traditions about the archives.



John F. Schmidt, probably early 1950s.

Despite the close ties with the General Conference Historical Committee, the General Conference only designated the archives at Bethel their official archival repository in 1964. At that time, many records were transferred from General Conference offices, or the possession of individual General Conference leaders, to the archives. According to oral tradition, for example, P. H. Richert, long-time chair of the mission board, had kept the mission records in breakfast cereal boxes, one month of papers per box. One can still see the bend in the paper from this storage method.

The work of the archives and historical library are closely integrated, although the Mennonite Church USA has taken responsibility primarily for the archival work. Many researchers use both archival and library materials. For example, family history researchers often will use both published family histories and membership records of congregations



Cornelius Krahn looking at rare books, about 1958.

to answer their questions about the past.

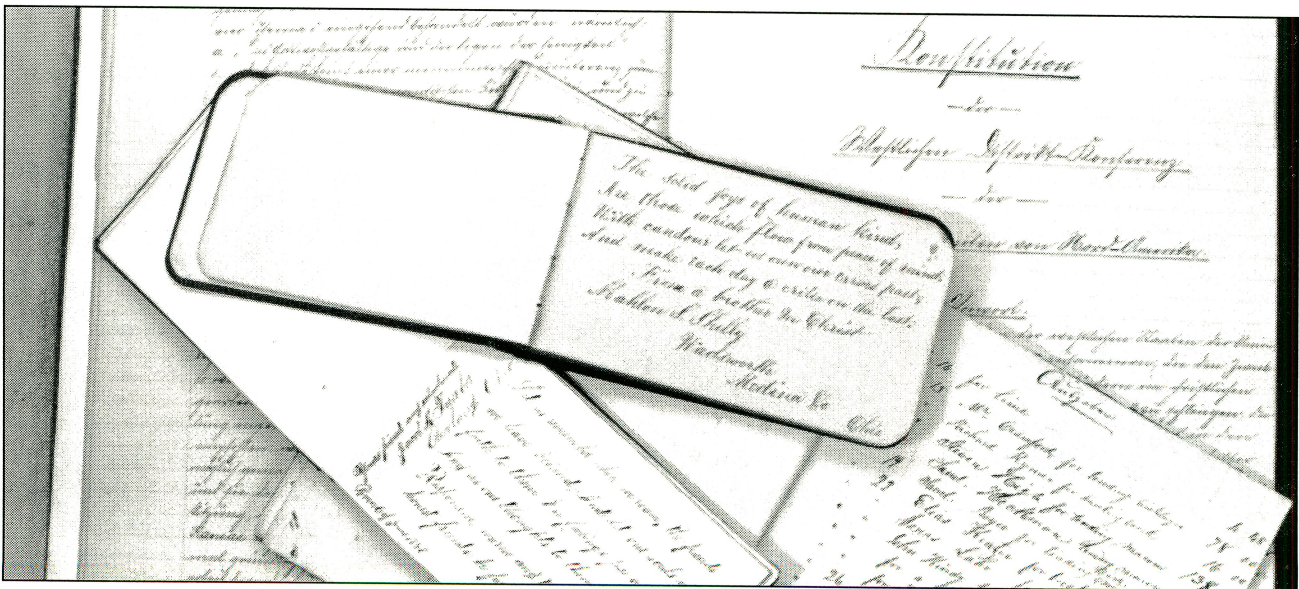
The archives currently contain around 4300 cubic feet of documents, 30



Mennonite Library and Archives about 1951 or 1952, then located in the basement of the old Science Hall at Bethel. Cornelius Krahn is at the left, and John F. Schmidt at right.

back to 1759 and some family history material earlier. (The van der Smissens are allegedly descended from the medieval emperor Charlemagne.) Many languages are represented, including German, Low German, Russian, Dutch, and French. In the papers of missionaries to Native Americans H. R. Voth and Rodolphe Petter one also finds Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Hopi. Such collections are often used by anthropologists and linguists who have only a peripheral interest in Mennonite history and wonder why these valuable Native American collections are located in a Mennonite archives.

Some records have dramatic stories, such as the church record books of



Miscellaneous collection of documents from the archives.

percent are records of the former General Conference Mennonite Church, 19 percent are records of Bethel College, and another 30 percent are personal papers of individuals and families. The rest includes area conference records, records of individual congregations, and records of various Mennonite organizations, sometimes obscure, such as the Leisy Orphan Aid Society of Halstead, Kansas; and also records of non-

Mennonite peace organizations, such as Kansans Concerned about Vietnam, from the 1960s and 1970s. The archives contain an estimated eleven million pages, weighing over sixty-four tons.

There are numerous interesting collections in the archives. Perhaps the oldest archival documents can be found in the van der Smissen family papers, with correspondence dating

the Mennonite church in Danzig, with charred edges, recovered by MCC workers in Poland after World War II.

With the creation of the new Mennonite Church USA, the "Archives" part of the Mennonite Library and Archives is now the Archives of the Mennonite Church USA—North Newton, preserving

records of enduring value associated with Mennonite Church USA and enabling researchers to ask questions of and carry on conversations with the Mennonite past.


Current staff includes John D. Thiesen, archivist (and co-director of libraries for Bethel College). John began working in the archives and historical library as a student in the late 1970s and has worked full-time



John D. Thiesen, archivist. (photo credit: jes)



James R. Lynch, assistant archivist.

there since 1990. Barbara Thiesen (also a Bethel co-director of libraries, and married to John Thiesen) is librarian for the historical library part of the collection, at about one-quarter time; she has worked there since 1984. James Lynch is assistant archivist and began in 2000. There are also several volunteers, some of them long-term friends of the archives. 

For more see our web pages at <http://www.bethelks.edu/services/mla/>

Book Review

By Harold Lehman

Grace S. Grove, *L.J. Heatwole, A Granddaughter's View*, published by the author, 2001, 211 pp. \$18.00, plus \$3.00 for postage and handling.

Lewis J. Heatwole, known in adult life as L.J., was born to David and Catherine Driver Heatwole on December 4, 1852. Young Lewis, an observant curious child, was early interested in the phases of the moon and in the stars. In book learning, he was a precocious scholar. As the eldest child in this mid-nineteenth-century Mennonite home in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, Lewis participated in the chores of rural life, planting and harvesting, butchering and soap-making, picking berries and chopping wood.

But a dark time was coming. With the presidential election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 and the subsequent secession of the Southern states, the Mennonites in Virginia found themselves within the battle lines of both the Confederate and Union forces. The Shenandoah Valley was regarded as the "granary of the South." Marauding parties from both sides ravaged the farms for food, horses, grain and straw. During General Sheridan's raid in October, 1864, the Heatwole family spent a chilly night in the meadow while watching their barn being torched along with dozens of other barns and mills within the immediate community.

Twenty years later L.J. published an eloquent article describing the effects of the Civil War on the Mennonites of the Valley, with the title, "The Civil War Unvarnished" (included in the book). As a youth he had observed the peace stance taken by young men who refused to bear arms.

Some hid in the mountains to the west; others fled to Union territory; others were imprisoned for their stand.

For this era, L.J. had unusual opportunities for formal education. After elementary schooling he attended Normal Institute at Bridgewater and Harrisonburg, Virginia. Thus prepared as an elementary teacher he taught in seven different one-room country schools for a total of twenty-four years. Meantime he enrolled in a summer term at the University of Virginia and through correspondence work was granted a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from Oskaloosa College, Iowa, by 1914.

On November 11, 1875 L.J. was married to Mary Alice Coffman, daughter of Samuel Coffman. To this union were born seven children, six of them surviving to adulthood. Although L.J.'s activities often took him away from home, his first love was his wife and children. He kept meticulous diaries of family activities and records of family finances.

It is in weather observations and astronomy that L.J. made a unique public contribution. At age fifteen he began to keep weather records in his diary. Beginning in 1884 he was recognized as a weather observer, sending regular reports to the U.S. Weather Bureau and to newspapers. The weather station he founded at Dale Enterprise, Virginia, is still in operation, now the third oldest in continual use in the nation.

Kindred interests of L.J.'s were astronomy and almanac calculations. At one time he was supplying weather calculations for sixty almanacs worldwide. His proposals for a permanent calendar to correct the inconveniences of the Gregorian calendar

were presented to the Calendar Revision Congress of the League of Nations in 1913. L.J. understood the sciences of his day as reflected in his book *Key to the Almanac and the Sidereal Heavens*, published by the Mennonite Publishing House in 1908. He was intrigued by the connections between religion, astronomy, and meteorology. He wrote articles and gave lectures on his scientific interests.

L.J. thought his talents lay more in writing than in public speaking. His diaries, notes, newspaper articles, travelogues and scientific papers left an unusual paper trail of his life. Added to these are his religious articles and sermons, all attesting to the broad interests of this Mennonite leader.

The church called L.J. into the ministry of the Middle District of the Virginia Mennonite Conference in 1887. His occasional ten-to-fourteen-day circuit rides on horseback to the scattered churches in West Virginia are recorded in his diaries. L.J. had a special concern for the salvation of young people and found himself frustrated by the objections within the district regarding Sunday schools and "protracted" revival meetings.

In 1890 the Heatwole family took an interesting detour by moving to Garden City, Missouri. While there L.J. was called to the office of bishop with oversight of churches in Missouri and Kansas. While he found the church situation less divisive than in Virginia, the family returned home to the Shenandoah Valley within three years. Factors in the move included family illnesses and L.J. having experienced a close call in a

deadly tornado in Kansas.

On L.J.'s return, his father-in-law, Bishop Samuel Coffman, called him to be an assistant. L.J. was soon caught up in the turmoil which eventually resulted in a church split and the birth of the Old Order Mennonites in Virginia. Although L.J. received support from prominent church leaders elsewhere, the local charges and countercharges took their toll on him.



As a churchman, L.J. in his later years held membership on publication, education and music committees. In World War I an indictment for treason and a substantial fine were brought against L.J. for advising a West Virginia preacher to encourage his church members not to purchase U.S. war bonds and stamps.

Early on, L.J. was a supporter and the initial board chairman of Eastern Mennonite School. In 1926 his wife, Molly, died. A son and daughter then

took care of L.J. On March 11, 1928, L.J. preached his farewell sermon (included in its entirety in the book). He continued his weather observations and newspaper reporting until the last year of his life. His death occurred on December 26, 1932, at the age of 80.

This is a well-written biography by granddaughters Mary E. Suter (deceased) and Grace S. Grove. The writing, augmented by many quotations from their grandfather, provides a delightful blend of facts, stories and feelings about this many-faceted man, about the social milieu of his day, and about Mennonite life a century ago. *L*

—Harold D. Lehman,
Harrisonburg, Va. Is retired
from teaching at Eastern
Mennonite University.

*Photograph was compliments
of Grace S. Grove,
Harrisonburg VA—from the
cover of the book.*

I Wish I'd Been There: Menno's Moment of Decision, January 30, 1536

by Gerlof D. Homan

How fascinating it would be to be able to observe all of human history from the very beginning to the present. But I would be satisfied if I could observe just a small sliver of it, such as one aspect of the life of Menno Simons. Much has been written about Menno Simons' life and work, but we really do not know that much about him. We find only a few brief autobiographical details in his writings.

I can think of many episodes or phases of Menno's life I would have liked to observe very closely. His parents and siblings, his education for the ministry, his early priesthood and religious growth come to mind. I would be most interested in the religious and intellectual environment of that time, to determine its impact on Menno. This, for instance: I would like to know if Menno was influenced by the great humanist Erasmus and the so-called sacramentarians, those who rejected the traditional Catholic sacraments. I wish I could have taken a stroll in the 1530s through the small Frisian village of Witmarsum, Menno's birthplace—where he later became a priest—to meet many of its inhabitants and visit his congregation. It would have been interesting to determine how much of the Protestant Reformation had influenced the Witmarsum natives. Later I would have liked to meet his spouse Geertruydt Hoyer and children, and to accompany Menno on his long and often dangerous ministry. But one important episode in his life I especially wish I could have witnessed: his conversion to the

Anabaptist faith. This took place between 1535 and his final exit from the Catholic Church on January 30, 1536.

In 1531 Menno became a priest in Witmarsum, after serving as vicar in neighboring Pingjum beginning in 1528. As we know, Menno had been

1534-35 to usher in a "New Jerusalem." The authorities moved against them and killed many of the Münsterites.

Similar events occurred in Amsterdam. Here also the authorities crushed the rebels, killing and executing many, including a Peter

Simons, who might have been Menno's brother. It would take many years for the young Anabaptist movement to recover from this terrible episode. It was Menno who did much to restore the Anabaptists' reputation as a peaceful movement.




Menno Simons by Christoffel van Sichem, Engraving circa 1608.

Menno was seriously shaken by the Olde Klooster episode and began to reflect upon his own "unclean, carnal life" and the "hypocritical doctrine and idolatry" which he practiced daily in "appearance of godliness, but without relish." He decried the violence of the Münsterites at Olde Klooster but also noticed their willingness to give their lives. To some extent Menno felt partially responsible for their misguided conduct by having disclosed to some of them earlier the "abominations of the papal system."²

But Menno continued in his "comfortable life and acknowledged abominations" simply in order that he might enjoy "physical comfort and escape the cross of Christ." However, in the course of time he did begin to preach publicly from the pulpit "the true word of repentance, to point the people to the narrow path, and in the power of the scripture openly to reprove all sin and wickedness, all idolatry and false worship, and to present the true worship. . . [and] true baptism and the

struggling and doubting for years about infant baptism, the sacraments, his lack of biblical knowledge, etc. For many years he sympathized with—but did not support—religious dissidents. However, he was greatly disturbed over the events at the monastery, the Olde Klooster. In 1535 a number of Münsterites, or radical "anabaptists," seized this monastery located near the Frisian city of Bolsward. They were the followers of Jan van Leyden and other radicals who had seized control of the city of Münster, Germany, in

Lord's supper, according to the doctrine of Christ."³ It would have been interesting to listen to him preach and to observe his religious growth which finally, after some nine months, led to his renunciation of all "worldly reputation, name and fame," his "unchristian abominations ... masses, infant baptism and ... easy life" and "willingly submitted to distress and poverty under the heavy cross of Christ ..."⁴ This official exit from the Catholic church occurred on January 30, 1536. He was now forty years old. It had taken him many years to make the decision to leave Babel and to enter Jerusalem,⁵ as he phrased it. We do not know why it took him so long to break with Rome.

Subsequently, Menno left Witmarsum, married, and in 1537 was asked to lead the scattered and demoralized Anabaptist flock. He and his family embarked upon a long and often dangerous evangelical ministry. Often they traveled one step ahead of the authorities. He wrote much and debated with various critics, until he finally settled in Oldesloe near Hamburg in 1554. Here he died in 1561. 

—*Gerlof D. Homan, Normal, Illinois, is author of American Mennonites and the Great War, 1914-1918, (Herald Press, 1994).*

¹ *The Complete Writing of Menno Simons*, transl., Leonard Verduin (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), 670.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 671.

⁴ Ibid., 671.

⁵ Ibid., 672.

I Wish I'd Been There: Pioneers on the Prairies

By Harry Stauffer

Let's go traveling down memory lane to the early 1900s. I would like to relive the stories told by my four grandparents as they came from various parts of the United States as pioneers to the great Northwest of Alberta.

Back then there were wide-open stretches with no roads or fences, only prairie trails. The land was inhabited by many native people. What peace and stillness prevailed in the countryside, except for the occasional shrill whistle of a passing train on its way across this vast expanse.


Our grandparents felt secure as they unloaded their possessions beside the ramp along the railway track. They had no fear of anything being taken, although their belongings remained there for over a week before they could be transferred to their homesteads. When they did return to get their things, there was not a single item missing.

What a welcome the few established pioneers extended to travelers like my grandparents! The pioneers had a welcome mat waiting for all those weary travelers, who arrived by foot, oxen team, or horse-drawn wagons. The welcome was appreciated, even if it meant sleeping under the kitchen table for the night because of lack of space.

Imagine this: a clear, cold evening traveling as a family to spend time with relatives or neighbors, being pulled by a team of horses with sleigh bells tinkling, the reflection of the full moon looking like diamonds racing across the top of snow while all

are snuggled in buffalo robes with a hot stone or brick to keep their feet warm, and sleigh runners crunching as they glide over the snow. They can see the breath coming from the horses' nostrils. My grandparents had not a care or worry until they heard the howl of a coyote which sent shivers up their spines. Then they snuggled a little further under the comfort of those warm robes.

When the family arrived, the grandchildren enjoyed a cup of cocoa or coffee with some of Grandma's yummy cookies. After an evening of fun and games, Grandpa gave praise and honour for God's protective care, freedom of worship, and the bounties of the earth.

They had no fear of returning to a home with unlocked doors. There was no vandalized property. A weary traveler felt at home even if the owner was gone. That is the way it was in those days. 

—*Harry Stauffer continues to live on the Stauffer family farm in Alberta with his wife of fifty-six years, Gladys Reist Stauffer. An 80-year-old retired farmer and dairyman, he is a member of Salem Mennonite Church in Tofield and serves as the Northwest Mennonite Conference historian.*

Book Review

by Elaine Sommers Rich

Strangers At Home, Amish and Mennonite Women in History. Edited by Kimberly D. Schmidt, Diane Zimmerman Umble, Steven D. Reschly, Johns Hopkins University Press. 2002. Pp.398. \$39.95.

This collection of fifteen scholarly essays about Amish and Mennonite women in history grew out of the historic *The Quiet in the Land* conference at

Millersville University, June 1995. That conference broke new ground. A whole generation of academically trained young women presented the results of their research, much of it for doctoral dissertations. That conference could not have taken place in 1950. The thesis of the book is that ideas about gender, often changing, have strongly shaped the development of Mennonite communities down through the centuries. Part I, entitled "Practice Makes Gender," examines the way cultural perceptions influence history. Hasia Diner writes of how her position as an insider helped in her study of Orthodox Jews, even as her position of outsider gave her certain advantages in research about immigrant Irish communities. This section also contains ethnographic studies of Old Order Amish (Diane Zimmerman Umble), of eastern

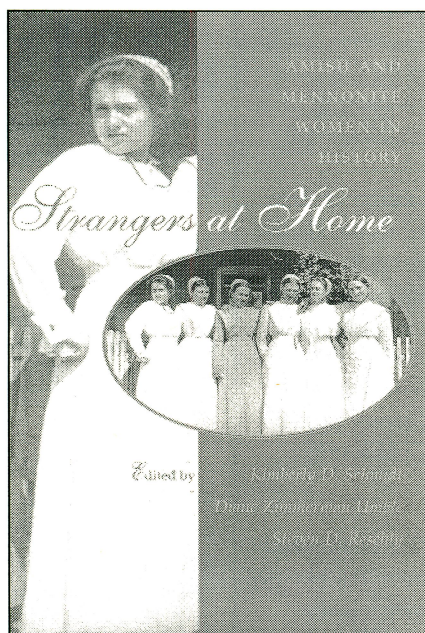
Pennsylvania plain dress for women (Beth E. Graybill), of a new religious ritual of breadmaking at communion time among Old Order River Brethren (Margaret C. Reynolds), and of Lancaster County Amish women and the government during the New Deal (Katherine Jellison). Part II looks at how views of gender shaped the culture of five different Anabaptist communities in the past: (1) Augsburg in the 16th century (Jeni Hiatt Umble), (2) Paraguay in the 1920s (Marlene Epp), (3) Johnson

County, Iowa, in the 1960s (Steven D. Reschly), (4) the Hopi pueblos in Arizona, 1893-1910, as impacted by Martha Moser Voth (Cathy Ann Trotta), and conservative Mennonites in Croghan, New York, post-World War II (Kimberly D. Schmidt). Part III, "(Re)creating Gendered Tradition" looks at how gender roles are continu-

ously changing. Royden K. Loewen's study of farm women in Meade, Kansas shows how they changed in the 1950s from being co-producers with their husbands to being economic consumers. Barbara Bolz contrasts Quaker and Mennonite women's use of silence. Julia Kasdorf notes the difference between official views of "plainness" and the historical reality. Perhaps the most provocative essay in the volume is the last, Jane Marie Pederson's about contemporary Anabaptist women and antimod-

ernism. What happens when women resist the Ordnung? Has the embrace of evangelicalism enabled some groups to feel that they are keeping their core values while at the same time subordinating women? She notes that among the Old Order River Brethren the "only distinct markers of group identity and distance from the dominant culture are rooted in a highly self-conscious commitment to maintaining a traditional gender asymmetry ... Only the rejection of contemporary fashions for women sets them apart" (p. 347). Pederson questions the "consequences of overloading women as the bearers of culture and morality" (p. 356). She looks forward to a creative re-casting of gender roles. The twenty pages of works cited indicate the extensive scholarship of the writers, although I was surprised that Katie Funk Wiebe's *Women among the Brethren* (Hillsboro, 1979) was not listed. **L**

—Elaine Sommers Rich, Bluffton, Ohio, is well known for her thoughtful column, "Thinking with . . ." in the Mennonite Weekly Review.



Recent Publications

Afton, John and Corrine. *Mehr Zimmermans*. 2002. Order from authors: PO Box 103, Benton, KS 67017.

Bontrager, Neomah. *Family record of Manasses J. Bontrager and Lydia Yoder 1843-2000*. 2000. \$25. Order from author: 10020 W 200 S, Shipshewana, IN 46565.

Graphic record of the descendants of Johannes Kennel (1717-1806). 2001. Order from: Clifford Kennel, 3727 Wayne Madison Rd, Trenton, OH 45067.

Helmuth, Orva S. *Helmuth family records of the descendants of Samuel J. and Fannie (Nisley) Helmuth*. 1997. Order from author: RR 2 Box 174, Arthur, IL 61911.

Hershberger, Ben A. *Family record of Andy J. and Susan (Byler) Hershberger 1913-1998*. 1998. Order from author: RR 3 Box 339-B, Punxutawny, PA 15767.

Hochstetler, Willis. *Family record of Monroe & Catherine (Hoschstetler) Hochstetler 1882-2001*. 2001. \$10. Order from: Willis and Sarah Hochstetler, 305 Beech Rd, Nappanee, IN 46550.

Hostetler, Eldon E. *Nathaniel and Mary Hostetler family story*. Order from author: 1014 1st St Apt 6, Milford, NE 68405.

Keim, Paul. *Descendants of Emanuel J. Schrock and Catherine J. Troyer 1864-2000*. 2001. Order from author: 1083 County Road 1353, Ashland, OH 44805.

Miller Family History and descendants of Levi J. Miller and Susan Beachy and Lizzie Schlabach. 1998. \$8. Order from: Katie Keim, 7695 Township Road 602, Fredericksburg, OH 44627.

Roes, Marion. *Where have all the Roeses gone?* 2001. Order from author: 555 Brigantine Dr, Waterloo, ON N2K 4A7.

Schwartz, Maryann E.K. *Descendants of Jacob P. Schwartz and Emily (Graber) Schwartz*. 2000. \$10.75. Order from author: 4268 Beaver St, Springboro, PA 16435.

Wolf, Mamika. *Descendants of John B. Wolf and Elizabeth Fitz, Vol. 1*. 2000. Order from: George Fridley, 401 Wolf, Elkhart, IN 46516.

Mennonite Mirth:

Prop 'em up on the leanin' side!

by Jep Hostetler

Dad and Mother thought a farm would give their seven children, several foster children, and a recovering alcoholic or two the space they needed. I do not imagine we had more than 100 acres on any of the farms where we lived. The idea behind the "farm life" was to give us five boys something constructive to do. So we spent our growing-up years on the rented Miller farm, the Hooley farm, and Yoder farms. We did the best we could to try to farm, milk ten or twelve cows every morning and evening, sow and harvest crops, and maintain a very large garden. Large gardens meant that there would be a very busy time during the summer, canning vegetables and fruit.

The fruits of our labor were to be shared, particularly with folks who came to dinner. The meal was usually a Sunday noon meal, right after church. We invited a variety of folks to join us for stew, fresh sweet corn, tomatoes, squash, and a few vegetables that I still have a hard time identifying.

The tradition has been carried on into my own adult life. We believe that hospitality is one of the best gifts one can give to strangers and friends alike.

Our interaction with prison persons, especially incarcerated men, grew out of our interest in those for whom life was not so fortunate. One such person was Henry. Henry was a tall, slender man who had been in jail for eight years by the time we met him. He was the first African American

man our daughters had ever met. Often Henry's mother, Annie, would come to our house for the evening meal, now appropriately called "dinner." We enjoyed her company, and we enjoyed her sweet-potato pie.

Over dinner one evening, Annie asked if she could say the blessing. Of course! Annie began, "Dear Lord, when we all get to heaven it will be all howdy howdies, and no good-byes. Thank you Jesus!" Her prayer went on, as she gently rocked forward and backward, blessing the food, the relatives, the President, world leaders, the local churches and their pastors and especially her sick friends, for whom she requested, "And dear Lord, be with all my sick friends, just prop 'em up on the leanin' side." I smiled inside, delighting in the beauty of this prayer.

These words will forever be in my memory bank: "just prop 'em up on the leanin' side." Sometimes we tend to want the world at our disposal and our pleas and supplications to God are grand and complete. We want everything fixed, cured, better, and just plain well. Annie's humble request says it best: "I'm not asking a whole lot here Lord, and I don't really want to be presumptuous, so a 'prop up' would do just fine for now, thank you." 🙏

—Jep Hostetler, Ph.D., Columbus, Ohio, uses humor and medicine to "prop people up on the leanin' side." He is an associate professor emeritus at the Ohio State University College of Medicine. He and his wife Joyce serve as staff persons for the Mennonite Medical Association.

The Back Page

Our congratulations to Gemechu Gebre Telila, Sarah Marie Rempel, and Stefan Epp, first place winners in the 2002 John Horsch Mennonite History Essay Contest. Their papers, along with the other winners and their entries are listed below.

Class I – Seminary and Graduate School: First, Gemechu Gebre Telila, Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Virginia, *History of the Meserete Kristos Church at Wonji Gefersa, Ethiopia, during the Derg, 1974-1991: "God Works for the Good"*. Second, Ami L. Hudson, Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Virginia, *The Enigma of Power in Christ's Humble Church* Third, John W. Jacobs, Jr., Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Virginia, *For other foundation can no-man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 3:11*

Class II – Undergraduate College and University: First, Sarah Marie Rempel, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas, *Unification*


Unveiled: A Tale of Two Churches and the Intricacies of Identity Conflict. Second, Tammy Parker, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana, *Education and Ethnicity: The Relationship between Russian Mennonites and School District Formation in Buhler and Goessel, Kansas* Third, Zachary J. Walton, Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio, *Advocating the Kingdom: The Ecclesiological Rhetorical Strategies of Post-Münsterian Dutch Anabaptist Leaders*

Class III – High School: First, Stefan Epp, Rosthern Junior College, Rosthern, Saskatchewan, *The Life of Claas Epp, Jr.*

In each class first-place winners are awarded \$100, second place, \$75 and third place \$50. First-place winners also receive a one-year subscription to the *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. All entrants receive a one-year subscription to the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*.

This year's entries were judged by Perry Bush, Professor of History at Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio; Leonard Gross, Goshen, Indiana, retired Executive Director of the Archives of the Mennonite Church; and Mark Metzler Sawin, Assistant Professor of History at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Eleven students in three academic levels submitted papers on various topics in Mennonite studies.

The annual contest is sponsored by Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee, and is named in honor of John Horsch (1867-1941), the German-American Mennonite historian and polemicist who did much to reawaken interest in Anabaptist and Mennonite studies in the twentieth century. The deadline for submission of entries for next year's contest is June 15, 2003. We especially encourage essays that reflect the experience of people of color in Anabaptist/Mennonite communities. —jes 

Visit our web sites at www.goshen.edu/mcarchives/ and www.bethelks.edu/services/mla

Mennonite Historical Bulletin

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